THE

WORKS

OF THE

ENGLISH POETS.

WITH

PREFACES,

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL,

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

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SMITH.

EDMUND SMITH is one of thoſe lucky writers who have, without much labour, attained high reputation, and who are mentioned with reverence rather for the poſſeſſion than the exertion of uncommon abilities.

Of his life little is known; and that little claims no praiſe but what can be given to intellectual excellence, ſeldom employed to any virtuous purpoſe. His character, as given by Mr. Oldiſworth, with all the partiality of friendſhip, which is ſaid by Dr. Burton to ſhow "what fine things one man of parts can "ſay to another," and which, however, compriſes great part of what can be known of Mr. Smith, it is better to tranſcribe at once, than

to take by pieces. I ſhall ſubjoin ſuch little memorials as accident has enabled me to collect.

Mr. EDMUND SMITH was the only ſon of an eminent merchant, one Mr. Neale, by a daughter of the famous baron Lechmere. Some misfortunes of his father, which were ſoon followed by his death, were the occaſion of the ſon's being left very young in the hands of a near relation (one who married Mr. Neale's ſiſter), whoſe name was Smith.

This gentleman and his lady treated him as their own child, and put him to Weſtminſter-ſchool under the care of Dr. Buſby; whence, after the loſs of his faithful and generous guardian (whoſe name he aſſumed and retained), he was removed to Chriſt-church in Oxford, and there by his aunt handſomely maintained till her death; after which he continued a member of that learned and ingenious ſociety, till within five years of his own; though, ſome time before his leaving Chriſt-church, he was ſent for by his mother to Worceſter, and owned and acknowledged as her legitimate ſon; which had not been mentioned, but to wipe

wipe off the aſperſions that were ignorantly caſt by ſome on his birth. It is to be remembered for our author's honour, that, when at Weſtminſter election he ſtood a candidate for one of the univerſities, he ſo ſignally diſtinguiſhed himſelf by his conſpicuous performances, that there aroſe no ſmall contention between the repreſentative electors of Trinity-college in Cambridge and Chriſt-church in Oxon, which of thoſe two royal ſocieties ſhould adopt him as their own. But the electors of Trinity-college having the preference of choice that year, they reſolutely elected him; who yet, being invited at the ſame time to Chirſt-church, choſe to accept of a ſtudentſhip there. Mr. Smith's perfections, as well natural as acquired, ſeem to have been formed upon Horace's plan; who ſays, in his Art of Poetry,

" —Ego nec ſtudium ſine divite venâ,
" Nec rude quid profit video ingenium: alterius ſic
" Altera poſcit opem res, & conjurat amice."

He was endowed by Nature with all thoſe excellent and neceſſary qualifications which are previous to the accompliſhment of a great man. His memory was large and tenacious, yet by a

curious felicity chiefly ſuſceptible of the fineſt impreſſions it received from the beſt authors he read, which it always preſerved in their primitive ſtrength and amiable order.

He had a quickneſs of apprehenſion, and vivacity of underſtanding, which eaſily took in and ſurmounted the moſt ſubtle and knotty parts of mathematicks and metaphyſicks. His wit was prompt and flowing, yet ſolid and piercing; his taſte delicate, his head clear, and his way of expreſſing his thoughts perſpicuous and engaging. I ſhall ſay nothing of his perſon, which yet was ſo well *turned*, that no neglect of himſelf in his dreſs could render it diſagreeable; inſomuch that the fair ſex, who obſerved and eſteemed him, at once commended and reproved him by the name of the *handſome* ſloven. An eager but generous and noble emulation grew up with him; which (as it were a rational ſort of inſtinct) puſhed him upon ſtriving to excel in every art and ſcience that could make him a credit to his college, and that college the ornament of the moſt learned and polite univerſity; and it was his happineſs to have ſeveral contemporaries and fellow-ſtudents who exerciſed and excited this

this virtue in themſelves and others, thereby becoming ſo deſervedly in favour with this age, and ſo good a proof of its nice diſcernment. His judgement, naturally good, ſoon ripened into an exquiſite fineneſs and diſtinguiſhing ſagacity, which as it was active and buſy, ſo it was vigorous and manly, keeping even paces with a rich and ſtrong imagination, always upon the wing, and never tired with aſpiring. Hence it was, that, though he writ as young as Cowley, he had no puerilities; and his earlieſt productions were ſo far from having any thing in them mean and trifling, that, like the junior compoſitions of Mr. Stepney, they may make grey authors bluſh. There are many of his firſt eſſays in oratory, in epigram, elegy, and epique, ſtill handed about the univerſity in manuſcript, which ſhew a maſterly hand; and, though maimed and injured by frequent tranſcribing, make their way into our moſt celebrated miſcellanies, where they ſhine with uncommon luſtre. Beſides thoſe verſes in the Oxford books, which he could not help ſetting his name to, ſeveral of his compoſitions came abroad under other names, which his own ſingular modeſty, and faithful

ſilence, ſtrove in vain to conceal. The Encœnia and public Collections of the Univerſity upon State Subjects were never in ſuch eſteem, either for elegy and congratulation, as when he contributed moſt largely to them: and it was natural for thoſe, who knew his peculiar way of writing, to turn to his ſhare in the work, as by far the moſt reliſhing part of the entertainment. As his parts were extraordinary, ſo he well knew how to improve them; and not only to poliſh the diamond, but enchaſe it in the moſt ſolid and durable metal. Though he was an academick the greateſt part of his life, yet he contracted no ſourneſs of temper, no ſpice of pedantry, no itch of diſputation, or obſtinate contention for the old or new philoſophy, no aſſuming way of dictating to others; which are faults (though excuſable) which ſome are inſenſibly led into, who are conſtrained to dwell long within the walls of a private college. His converſation was pleaſant and inſtructive; and what Horace ſaid of Plotius, Varius, and Virgil, might juſtly be applied to him:

"Nil ego contulerim jucundo ſanus Amico."

Sat. v. l. 1.

As

As correct a writer as he was in his moſt elaborate pieces, he read the works of others with candour, and reſerved his greateſt ſeverity for his own compoſitions; being readier to cheriſh and advance, than damp or depreſs a riſing genius, and as patient of being excelled himſelf (if any could excel him) as induſtrious to excel others.

'Twere to be wiſhed he had confined himſelf to a particular profeſſion, who was capable of ſurpaſſing in any; but in this, his want of application was in a great meaſure owing to his want of due encouragement.

He paſſed through the exerciſes of the college and univerſity with unuſual applauſe; and though he often ſuffered his friends to call him off from his retirements, and to lengthen out thoſe jovial avocations, yet his return to his ſtudies were ſo much the more paſſionate, and his intention upon thoſe refined pleaſures of reading and thinking ſo vehement (to which his facetious and unbended intervals bore no proportion), that the habit grew upon him, and the ſeries of meditation and reflection being kept up whole weeks together, he could better ſort his ideas, and take in the ſundry parts of

a ſcience at one view, without interruption or confuſion. Some indeed of his acquaintance, who were pleaſed to diſtinguiſh between the wit and the ſcholar, extolled him altogether on the account of theſe titles; but others, who knew him better, could not forbear doing him juſtice as a prodigy in both kinds. He had ſignalized himſelf, in the ſchools, as a philoſopher and polemick of extenſive knowledge and deep penetration; and went through all the courſes with a wiſe regard to the dignity and importance of each ſcience. I remember him in the Divinity-ſchool reſponding and diſputing with a perſpicuous energy, a ready exactneſs, and commanding force of argument, when Dr. Jane worthily preſided in the chair; whoſe condeſcending and diſintereſted commendation of him gave him ſuch a reputation as ſilenced the envious malice of his enemies, who durſt not contradict the approbation of ſo profound a maſter in theology. None of thoſe ſelf-ſufficient creatures, who have either trifled with philoſophy, by attempting to ridicule it, or have encumbered it with novel terms, and burdenſome explanations, underſtood its real weight and purity half ſo well as Mr. Smith.

He

He was too diſcerning to allow of the character of unprofitable, rugged, and abſtruſe, which ſome ſuperficial ſcioliſts (ſo very ſmooth and polite as to admit of no impreſſion), either out of an unthinking indolence, or an ill-grounded prejudice, had affixed to this ſort of ſtudies. He knew the thorny terms of philoſophy ſerved well to fence-in the true doctrines of religion; and looked upon ſchool-divinity as upon a rough but well-wrought army, which might at once adorn and defend the Chriſtian hero, and equip him for the combat.

Mr. Smith had a long and perfect intimacy with all the Greek and Latin Claſſicks; with whom he had carefully compared whatever was worth peruſing in the French, Spaniſh, and Italian (to which languages he was no ſtranger), and in all the celebrated writers of his own country. But then, according to the curious obſervation of the late earl of Shafteſbury, he kept the poet in awe by regular criticiſm; and, as it were, married the two arts for their mutual ſupport and improvement. There was not a tract of credit, upon that ſubject, which he had not diligently examined, from Ariſtotle down to Hedelin and Boſſu; ſo that,

that, having each rule conſtantly before him, he could carry the art through every poem, and at once point out the graces and deformities. By this means he ſeemed to read with a deſign to correct, as well as imitate.

Being thus prepared, he could not but taſte every little delicacy that was ſet before him; though it was impoſſible for him at the ſame time to be fed and nouriſhed with any thing but what was ſubſtantial and laſting. He conſidered the ancients and moderns not as parties or rivals for fame, but as architects upon one and the ſame plan, the Art of Poetry; according to which he judged, approved, and blamed, without flattery or detraction. If he did not always commend the compoſitions of others, it was not ill-nature (which was not in his temper), but ſtrict juſtice that would not let him call a few flowers ſet in ranks, a glib meaſure, and ſo many couplets, by the name of poetry: he was of Ben Jonſon's opinion, who could not admire

——Verſes as ſmooth and ſoft as cream,
In which there was neither depth nor ſtream.

And

And therefore, though his want of complaiſance for ſome men's overbearing vanity made him enemies, yet the better part of mankind were obliged by the freedom of his reflections.

His Bodleian Speech, though taken from a remote and imperfect copy, hath ſhewn the world how great a maſter he was of the Ciceronian eloquence, mixed with the conciſeneſs and force of Demoſthenes, the elegant and moving turns of Pliny, and the acute and wiſe reflections of Tacitus.

Since Temple and Roſcommon, no man underſtood Horace better, eſpecially as to his happy diction, rolling numbers, beautiful imagery, and alternate mixture of the ſoft and the ſublime. This endeared Dr. Hannes's odes to him, the fineſt genius for Latin lyrick ſince the Auguſtan Age. His friend Mr. Philips's ode to Mr. St. John (late Lord Bolingbroke), after the manner of Horace's Luſory or Amatorian Odes, is certainly a maſter-piece: but Mr. Smith's Pocockius is of the ſublimer kind, though, like Waller's writings upon Oliver Cromwell, it wants not the moſt delicate and ſurpriſing turns peculiar to the perſon praiſed.

I do

I do not remember to have ſeen any thing like it in Dr. Bathurſt, who had made ſome attempts this way with applauſe. He was an excellent judge of humanity; and ſo good an hiſtorian, that in familiar diſcourſe he would talk over the moſt memorable facts in antiquity, the lives, actions, and characters, of celebrated men, with amazing facility and accuracy. As he had thoroughly read and digeſted Thuanus's works, ſo he was able to copy after him: and his talent in this kind was ſo well known and allowed, that he had been ſingled out by ſome great men to write a hiſtory, which it was for their intereſt to have done with the utmoſt art and dexterity. I ſhall not mention for what reaſons this deſign was dropped, though they are very much to Mr. Smith's honour. The truth is, and I ſpeak it before living witneſſes, whilſt an agreeable company could fix him upon a ſubject of uſeful literature, nobody ſhone to greater advantage: he ſeemed to be that Memmius whom Lucretius ſpeaks of;

—Quem tu, Dea, tempore in omni
Omnibus ornatum voluiſti excellere rebus.

His

His works are not many, and thoſe ſcattered up and down in Miſcellanies and Collections, being wreſted from him by his friends with great difficulty and reluctance. All of them together make but a ſmall part of that much greater body, which lies diſperſed in the poſſeſſion of numerous acquaintance; and cannot perhaps be made intire, without great injuſtice to him, becauſe few of them had his laſt hand, and the tranſcriber was often obliged to take the liberties of a friend. His condolence for the death of Mr. Philips is full of the nobleſt beauties, and hath done juſtice to the aſhes of that ſecond Milton, whoſe writings will laſt as long as the Engliſh language, generoſity, and valour. For him Mr. Smith had contracted a perfect friendſhip; a paſſion he was moſt ſuſceptible of, and whoſe laws he looked upon as ſacred and inviolable.

Every ſubject that paſſed under his pen had all the life, proportion, and embelliſhments beſtowed on it, which an exquiſite ſkill, a warm imagination, and a cool judgement, could poſſibly beſtow on it. The epique, lyrick, elegiac, every ſort of poetry, he touched upon (and he had touched upon a great variety),

was

was raiſed to its proper height, and the differences between each of them obſerved with a judicious accuracy. We ſaw the old rules and new beauties placed in admirable order by each other; and there was a predominant fancy and ſpirit of his own infuſed, ſuperior to what ſome draw off from the ancients, or from poeſies here and there culled out of the moderns, by a painful induſtry and ſervile imitation. His contrivances were adroit and magnificent; his images lively and adequate; his ſentiments charming and majeſtick; his expreſſions natural and bold; his numbers various and ſounding; and that enameled mixture of claſſical wit, which, without redundance and affectation, ſparkled through his writings, and were no leſs pertinent and agreeable.

His *Phædra* is a conſummate tragedy, and the ſucceſs of it was as great as the moſt ſanguine expectations of his friends could promiſe or foreſee. The number of nights, and the common method of filling the houſe, are not always the ſureſt marks of judging what encouragement a play meets with: but the generoſity of all the perſons of a refined taſte about

about town was remarkable on this occaſion; and it muſt not be forgotten how zealouſly Mr. Addiſon eſpouſed his intereſt, with all the elegant judgement and diffuſive good-nature for which that accompliſhed gentleman and author is ſo juſtly valued by mankind. But as to *Phædra*, ſhe has certainly made a finer figure under Mr. Smith's conduct, upon the Engliſh ſtage, than either in Rome or Athens; and if ſhe excels the Greek and Latin *Phædra*, I need not ſay ſhe ſurpaſſes the French one, though embelliſhed with whatever regular beauties and moving ſoftneſs Racine himſelf could give her.

No man had a juſter notion of the difficulty of compoſing than Mr. Smith, and he ſometimes would create greater difficulties than he had reaſon to apprehend. Writing with eaſe, what (as Mr. Wycherley ſpeaks) may be eaſily written, moved his indignation. When he was writing upon a ſubject, he would ſeriouſly conſider what Demoſthenes, Homer, Virgil, or Horace, if alive, would ſay upon that occaſion, which whetted him to exceed himſelf as well as others. Nevertheleſs, he could not, or would not, finiſh ſeveral ſubjects he undertook,

took; which may be imputed either to the briſkneſs of his fancy, ſtill hunting after new matter, or to an occaſional indolence, which ſpleen and laſſitude brought upon him, which, of all his foibles, the world was leaſt inclined to forgive. That this was not owing to conceit or vanity, or a fulneſs of himſelf (a frailty which has been imputed to no leſs men than Shakſpeare and Jonſon), is clear from hence; becauſe he left his works to the entire diſpoſal of his friends, whoſe moſt rigorous cenſures he even courted and ſolicited, ſubmitting to their animadverſions, and the freedom they took with them, with an unreſerved and prudent reſignation.

I have ſeen ſketches and rough draughts of ſome poems be deſigned, ſet out analytically; wherein the fable, ſtructure, and connexion, the images, incidents, moral, epiſodes, and a great variety of ornaments, were ſo finely laid out, ſo well fitted to the rules of art, and ſquared ſo exactly to the precedents of the ancients, that I have often looked on theſe poetical elements with the ſame concern, with which curious men are affected at the ſight of the moſt entertaining remains and ruins of an

antique figure or building. Thoſe fragments of the learned, which ſome men have been ſo proud of their pains in collecting, are uſeleſs rarities, without form and without life, when compared with theſe embryos which wanted not ſpirit enough to preſerve them; ſo that I cannot help thinking, that, if ſome of them were to come abroad, they would be as highly valued by the poets, as the ſketches of Julio and Titian are by the painters; though there is nothing in them but a few outlines, as to the deſign and proportion.

It muſt be confeſſed, that Mr. Smith had ſome defects in his conduct, which thoſe are moſt apt to remember who could imitate him in nothing elſe. His freedom with himſelf drew ſeverer acknowledgements from him than all the malice he ever provoked was capable of advancing, and he did not ſcruple to give even his misfortunes the hard name of faults: but, if the world had half his good-nature, all the ſhady parts would be entirely ſtruck out of his character.

A man, who, under poverty, calamities, and diſappointments, could make ſo many friends, and thoſe ſo truly valuable, muſt have

juſt and noble ideas of the paſſion of friendſhip, in the ſucceſs of which conſiſted the greateſt, if not the only, happineſs of his life. He knew very well what was due to his birth, though Fortune threw him ſhort of it in every other circumſtance of life. He avoided making any, though perhaps reaſonable, complaints of her diſpenſations, under which he had honour enough to be eaſy, without touching the favours ſhe flung in his way when offered to him at the price of a more durable reputation. He took care to have no dealings with mankind, in which he could not be juſt; and he deſired to be at no other expence in his pretenſions than that of intrinſick merit, which was the only burthen and reproach he ever brought upon his friends. He could ſay, as Horace did of himſelf, what I never yet ſaw tranſlated;

"—Meo ſum pauper in ære."

At his coming to town, no man was more ſurrounded by all thoſe who really had or pretended to wit, or more courted by the great men, who had then a power and opportunity of encouraging arts and ſciences, and gave proofs

proofs of their fondneſs for the name of Patron in many inſtances, which will ever be remembered to their glory. Mr. Smith's character grew upon his friends by intimacy, and outwent the ſtrongeſt prepoſſeſſions which had been conceived in his favour. Whatever quarrel a few ſour creatures, whoſe obſcurity is their happineſs, may poſſibly have to the age; yet amidſt a ſtudied neglect, and total diſuſe of all thoſe ceremonial attendances, faſhionable equipments, and external recommendations, which are thought neceſſary introductions into the *grande monde*, this gentleman was ſo happy as ſtill to pleaſe; and whilſt the rich, the gay, the noble, and honourable, ſaw how much he excelled in wit and learning, they eaſily forgave him all other differences. Hence it was that both his acquaintance and retirements were his own free choice. What Mr. Prior obſerves upon a very great character, was true of him; *that moſt of his faults brought their excuſe with them.*

Thoſe who blamed him moſt, underſtood him leaſt, it being the cuſtom of the vulgar to charge an exceſs upon the moſt complaiſant, and to form a character by the morals of a few,

who have ſometimes ſpoiled an hour or two in good company. Where only fortune is wanting to make a great name, that ſingle exception can never paſs upon the beſt judges and moſt equitable obſervers of mankind; and when the time comes for the world to ſpare their pity, we may juſtly enlarge our demands upon them for their admiration.

Some few years before his death, he had engaged himſelf in ſeveral conſiderable undertakings; in all which he had prepared the world to expect mighty things from him. I have ſeen about ten ſheets of his *Engliſh Pindar*, which exceeded any thing of that kind I could ever hope for in our own language. He had drawn out a plan of a tragedy of the *Lady Jane Grey*, and had gone through ſeveral ſcenes of it. But he could not well have bequeathed that work to better hands than where, I hear, it is at preſent lodged; and the bare mention of two ſuch names may juſtify the largeſt expectations, and is ſufficient to make the town an agreeable invitation.

His greateſt and nobleſt undertaking was *Longinus*. He had finiſhed an entire tranſlation of the *Sublime*, which he ſent to the reverend

Mr.

Mr. Richard Parker, a friend of his, late of Merton College, an exact critick in the Greek tongue, from whom it came to my hands. The French verſion of Monſieur Boileau, though truly valuable, was far ſhort of it. He propoſed a large addition to this work, of notes and obſervations of his own, with an entire ſyſtem of the Art of Poetry, in three books, under the titles of *Thought*, *Diction*, and *Figure*. I ſaw the laſt of theſe perfect, and in a fair copy, in which he ſhewed prodigious judgement and reading; and particularly had reformed the art of Rhetorick, by reducing that vaſt and confuſed heap of terms, with which a long ſucceſſion of pedants had encumbered the world, to a very narrow compaſs, comprehending all that was uſeful and ornamental in poetry. Under each head and chapter, he intended to make remarks upon all the ancients and moderns, the Greek, Latin, Engliſh, French, Spaniſh, and Italian poets, and to note their ſeveral beauties and defects.

What remains of his works is left, as I am informed, in the hands of men of worth and judgement, who loved him. It cannot be ſuppoſed they would ſuppreſs any thing that was

his, but out of reſpect to his memory, and for want of proper hands to finiſh what ſo great a genius had begun.

SUCH is the declamation of Oldiſworth, written while his admiration was yet freſh, and his kindneſs warm; and therefore ſuch as, without any criminal purpoſe of deceiving, ſhews a ſtrong deſire to make the moſt of all favourable truth. I cannot much commend the performance. The praiſe is often indiſtinct, and the ſentences are loaded with words of more pomp than uſe. There is little, however, that can be contradicted, even when a plainer tale comes to be told.

EDMUND NEALE, known by the name of Smith, was born at Handley, the ſeat of the Lechmeres, in Worceſterſhire. The year of his birth is uncertain *.

He was educated at Weſtminſter. It is known to have been the practice of Dr. Buſby to detain thoſe youths long at ſchool, of whom

* By his epitaph he appears to have been 42 years old when he died. He was conſequently born in the year 1668. E.

he

he had formed the higheſt expectations. Smit took his Maſter's degree on the 8th of July 1696: he therefore was probably admitted into the univerſity in 1689, when we may ſuppoſe him twenty years old.

His reputation for literature in his college was ſuch as has been told; but the indecency and licentiouſneſs of his behaviour drew upon him, Dec. 24, 1694, while he was yet only Batchelor, a publick admonition, entered upon record, in order to his expulſion. Of this reproof the effect is not known. He was probably leſs notorious. At Oxford, as we all know, much will be forgiven to literary merit; and of that he had exhibited ſufficient evidence by his excellent ode on the death of the great Orientaliſt, Dr. Pocock, who died in 1691, and whoſe praiſe muſt have been written by Smith, when he had been but two years in the univerſity.

This ode, which cloſed the ſecond volume of the *Muſæ Anglicanæ*, though perhaps ſome objections may be made to its Latinity, is by far the beſt Lyrick compoſition in that collection; nor do I know where to find it equalled among the modern writers. It expreſſes,

with great felicity, images not claſſical in claſſical diction: its digreſſions and returns have been deſervedly recommended by Trapp as models for imitation.

He had ſeveral imitations of Cowley:

Teſtitur hinc tot ſermo coloribus
Quot tu, Pococki, diſſimilis tui
Orator effers, quot viciſſim
Te memores celebrare gaudent.

I will not commend the figure which makes the orator *pronounce the colours*, or give to *colours memory* and *delight*. I quote it, however, as an imitation of theſe lines;

So many languages he had in ſtore,
That only Fame ſhall ſpeak of him in more.

The ſimile, by which an old man, retaining the fire of his youth, is compared to Ætna flaming through the ſnow, which Smith has uſed with great pomp, is ſtolen from Cowley, however little worth the labour of conveyance.

He proceeded to take his degree of Maſter of Arts, July 8, 1696. Of the exerciſes which he

he performed on that occaſion, I have not heard any thing memorable.

As his years advanced, he advanced in reputation: for he continued to cultivate his mind, though he did not amend his irregularities, by which he gave ſo much offence, that, April 24, 1700, the Dean and Chapter declared, "the place of Mr. Smith void, he "having been convicted of riotous miſbeha-"viour in the houſe of Mr. Cole an apothe-"cary; but it was referred to the Dean when "and upon what occaſion the ſentence ſhould "be put in execution."

Thus tenderly was he treated: the governors of his college could hardly keep him, and yet wiſhed that he would not force them to drive him away.

Some time afterwards he aſſumed an appearance of decency; in his own phraſe, he *whitened* himſelf, having a deſire to obtain the cenſorſhip, an office of honour and ſome profit in the college; but, when the election came, the preference was given to Mr. *Foulkes*, his junior: the ſame, I ſuppoſe, that joined with *Freind* in an edition of part of Demoſthenes. The cenſor is a tutor; and it was not thought proper

proper to truſt the ſuperintendance of others to a man who took ſo little care of himſelf.

From this time Smith employed his malice and his wit againſt the Dean, Dr. Aldrich, whom he conſidered as the opponent of his claim. Of his lampoon upon him, I once heard a ſingle line too groſs to be repeated.

But he was ſtill a genius and a ſcholar, and Oxford was unwilling to loſe him: he was endured, with all his pranks and his vices, two years longer; but on Dec. 20, 1705, at the inſtance of all the canons, the ſentence declared five years before was put in execution.

The execution was, I believe, ſilent and tender; for one of his friends, from whom I learned much of his life, appeared not to know it.

He was now driven to London, where he aſſociated himſelf with the Whigs, whether becauſe they were in power, or becauſe the Tories had expelled him, or becauſe he was a Whig by principle, may perhaps be doubted. He was, however, careſſed by men of great abilities, whatever were their party, and was ſupported

ſupported by the liberality of thoſe who delighted in his converſation.

There was once a deſign, hinted at by Oldiſworth, to have made him uſeful. One evening, as he was ſitting with a friend at a tavern, he was called down by the waiter; and, having ſtaid ſome time below, came up thoughtful. After a pauſe, ſaid he to his friend, "He that "wanted me below was Addiſon, whoſe buſi- "neſs was to tell me that a Hiſtory of the Re- "volution was intended, and to propoſe that "I ſhould undertake it. I ſaid, 'What "ſhall I do with the character of Lord Sun- "derland?' and Addiſon immediately returned, "'When, Rag, were you drunk laſt?' and "went away."

Captain *Rag* was a name which he got at Oxford by his negligence of dreſs.

This ſtory I heard from the late Mr. Clark of Lincoln's Inn, to whom it was told by the friend of Smith.

Such ſcruples might debar him from ſome profitable employments; but, as they could not deprive him of any real eſteem, they left him many friends; and no man was ever better introduced to the theatre than he, who, in that

that violent conflict of parties, had a Prologue and Epilogue from the firſt wits on either ſide.

But learning and nature will now and then take different courſes. His play pleaſed the criticks, and the criticks only. It was, as Addiſon has recorded, hardly heard the third night. Smith had indeed truſted entirely to his merit, had enſured no band of applauders, nor uſed any artifice to force ſucceſs, and found that naked excellence was not ſufficient for its own ſupport.

The play, however, was bought by Lintot, who advanced the price from fifty guineas, the current rate, to ſixty: and Halifax, the general patron, accepted the dedication. Smith's indolence kept him from writing the dedication, till Lintot, after fruitleſs importunity, gave notice that he would publiſh the play without it. Now therefore it was written; and Halifax expected the author with his book, and had prepared to reward him with a place of three hundred pounds a year. Smith, by pride or caprice, or indolence, or baſhfulneſs, neglected to attend him, though doubtleſs warned

warned and preſſed by his friends, and at laſt miſſed his reward by not going to ſolicit it.

Addiſon has, in the *Spectator*, mentioned the neglect of Smith's tragedy as diſgraceful to the nation, and imputes it to the fondneſs for operas then prevailing. The authority of Addiſon is great; yet the voice of the people, when to pleaſe the people is the purpoſe, deſerves regard. In this queſtion, I cannot but think the people in the right. The fable is mythological, a ſtory which we are accuſtomed to reject as falſe, and the manners are ſo diſtant from our own, that we know them not from ſympathy, but by ſtudy: the ignorant do not underſtand the action; the learned reject it as a ſchool-boy's tale; *incredulus odi*. What I cannot for a moment believe, I cannot for a moment behold with intereſt or anxiety. The ſentiments thus remote from life are removed yet further by the diction, which is too luxuriant and ſplendid for dialogue, and envelopes the thoughts rather than diſplays them. It is a ſcholar's play, ſuch as may pleaſe the reader rather than the ſpectator; the work of a vigorous and elegant mind, accuſtomed to pleaſe itſelf with its own conceptions,

tions, but of little acquaintance with the courſe of life.

Dennis tells us, in one of his pieces, that he had once a deſign to have written the tragedy of *Phædra*; but was convinced that the action was too mythological.

In 1709, a year after the exhibition of *Phædra*, died John Philips, the friend and fellow-collegian of Smith, who, on that occaſion, wrote a poem, which juſtice muſt place among the beſt elegies which our language can ſhew, an elegant mixture of fondneſs and admiration, of dignity and ſoftneſs. There are ſome paſſages too ludicrous; but every human performance has its faults.

This elegy it was the mode among his friends to purchaſe for a guinea; and, as his acquaintance was numerous, it was a very profitable poem.

Of his *Pindar*, mentioned by Oldiſworth, I have never otherwiſe heard. His *Longinus* he intended to accompany with ſome illuſtrations, and had ſelected his inſtances of the falſe *Sublime* from the works of Blackmore.

He reſolved to try again the fortune of the Stage, with the ſtory of Lady Jane Grey. It is not

not unlikely that his experience of the inefficacy and incredibility of a mythological tale, might determine him to chooſe an action from Engliſh Hiſtory, at no great diſtance from our own times, which was to end in a real event, produced by the operation of known characters.

A ſubject will not eaſily occur that can give more opportunities of informing the underſtanding, for which Smith was unqueſtionably qualified, or for moving the paſſions, in which I ſuſpect him to have had leſs power.

Having formed his plan and collected materials, he declared that a few months would complete his deſign; and, that he might purſue his work with leſs frequent avocations, he was, in June 1710, invited by Mr. George Ducket to his houſe at Gartham in Wiltſhire. Here he found ſuch opportunities of indulgence as did not much forward his ſtudies, and particularly ſome ſtrong ale, too delicious to be reſiſted. He eat and drank till he found himſelf plethorick: and, then reſolving to eaſe himſelf by evacuation, he wrote to an apothecary in the neighbourhood a preſcription of a purge ſo forcible, that the apothecary thought it his duty

duty to delay it till he had given notice of its danger. Smith, not pleaſed with the contradiction of a ſhopman, and boaſtful of his own knowledge, treated the notice with rude contempt, and ſwallowed his own medicine, which, in July 1710, brought him to the grave. He was buried at Gartham.

Many years afterwards, Ducket communicated to Oldmixon, the hiſtorian, an account pretended to have been received from Smith, that Clarendon's Hiſtory was, in its publication, corrupted by Aldrich, Smaldridge, and Atterbury; and that Smith was employed to forge and inſert the alterations.

This ſtory was publiſhed triumphantly by Oldmixon, and may be ſuppoſed to have been eagerly received; but its progreſs was ſoon checked; for finding its way into the Journal of Trevoux, it fell under the eye of Atterbury then an exile in France, who immediately denied the charge, with this remarkable particular, that he never in his whole life had once ſpoken to Smith; his company being, as muſt be inferred, not accepted by thoſe who attended to their characters.

The

The charge was afterwards very diligently refuted by Dr. Burton of Eaton, a man eminent for literature, and, though not of the ſame party with Aldrich and Atterbury, too ſtudious of truth to leave them burthened with a falſe charge. The teſtimonies which he has collected have convinced mankind that either Smith or Ducket was guilty of wilful and malicious falſehood.

This controverſy brought into view thoſe parts of Smith's life, which with more honour to his name might have been concealed.

Of Smith I can yet ſay a little more. He was a man of ſuch eſtimation among his companions, that the caſual cenſures or praiſes which he dropped in converſation were conſidered like thoſe of Scaliger, as worthy of preſervation.

He had great readineſs and exactneſs of criticiſm, and by a curſory glance over a new compoſition would exactly tell all its faults and beauties.

He was remarkable for the power of reading with great rapidity, and of retaining with great fidelity what he ſo eaſily collected.

He therefore always knew what the preſent queſtion required; and, when his friends ex-

preſſed their wonder at his acquiſitions, made in a ſtate of apparent negligence and drunkenneſs, he never diſcovered his hours of reading or method of ſtudy, but involved himſelf in affected ſilence, and fed his own vanity with their admiration and conjectures.

One practice he had, which was eaſily obſerved: if any thought or image was preſented to his mind, that he could uſe or improve, he did not ſuffer it to be loſt; but, amidſt the jollity of a tavern, or in the warmth of converſation, very diligently committed it to paper.

Thus it was that he had gathered two quires of hints for his new tragedy; of which Rowe, when they were put into his hands, could make, as he ſays, very little uſe, but which the collector conſidered as a valuable ſtock of materials.

When he came to London, his way of life connected him with the licentious and diſſolute; and he affected the airs and gaiety of a man of pleaſure; but his dreſs was always deficient: ſcholaſtick cloudineſs ſtill hung about him; and his merriment was ſure to produce the ſcorn of his companions.

With all his careleſſneſs, and all his vices, he was one of the murmurers at Fortune; and wondered

wondered why he was ſuffered to be poor, when Addiſon was careſſed and preferred: nor would a very little have contented him; for he eſtimated his wants at ſix hundred pounds a year.

In his courſe of reading it was particular, that he had diligently peruſed, and accurately remembered, the old romances of knight errantry.

He had a high opinion of his own merit, and was ſomething contemptuous in his treatment of thoſe whom he conſidered as not qualified to oppoſe or contradict him. He had many frailties; yet it cannot but be ſuppoſed that he had great merit, who could obtain to the ſame play a prologue from Addiſon, and an epilogue from Prior; and who could have at once the patronage of Halifax, and the praiſe of Oldiſworth.

For the power of communicating theſe minute memorials, I am indebted to my converſation with Gilbert Walmſley, late regiſter of the eccleſiaſtical court of Lichfield, who was acquainted both with Smith and Ducket; and declared, that, if the tale concerning Clarendon were forged, he ſhould ſuſpect Ducket of the

falſehood; "for Rag was a man of great veracity."

Of Gilbert Walmſley, thus preſented to my mind, let me indulge myſelf in the remembrance. I knew him very early; he was one of the firſt friends that literature procured me, and I hope that at leaſt my gratitude made me worthy of his notice.

He was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy; yet he never received my notions with contempt. He was a Whig, with all the virulence and malevolence of his party; yet difference of opinion did not keep us apart. I honoured him, and he endured me.

He had mingled with the gay world, without exemption from its vices or its follies, but had never neglected the cultivation of his mind; his belief of Revelation was unſhaken; his learning preſerved his principles; he grew firſt regular, and then pious.

His ſtudies had been ſo various, that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance with books was great; and what he did not immediately know he could at leaſt tell where to find. Such was his amplitude of learning, and ſuch his copiouſneſs of communication,

communication, that it may be doubted whether a day now paſſes in which I have not ſome advantage from his friendſhip.

At this man's table I enjoyed many chearful and inſtructive hours, with companions ſuch as are not often found; with one who has lengthened, and one who has gladdened life; with Dr. James, whoſe ſkill in phyſick will be long remembered; and with David Garrick, whom I hoped to have gratified with this character of our common friend: but what are the hopes of man! I am diſappointed by that ſtroke of death, which has eclipſed the gaiety of nations, and impoveriſhed the publick ſtock of harmleſs pleaſure.

In the Library at Oxford is the following ludicrous Analyſis of *Pocockius:*

EX AUTOGRAPHO.

[Sent by the Author to Mr. Urry.]

OPUSCULUM hoc, Halberdarie ampliſſime, in lucem proferre hactenus diſtuli, judicii tui acumen ſubveritus magis quam bipennis. Tandem aliquando Oden hanc ad te mitto ſublimem, teneram, flebilem, ſuavem, qualem demum divinus (ſi Muſis vacaret) ſcripſiſſet Gaſtrellus: adeo ſcilicet ſublimem ut inter legendum dormire, adeo flebilem ut ridere velis. Cujus elegantiam ut melius inſpicias, verſuum ordinem & materiam breviter referam. 1mus verſus de duobus præliis decantatis. 2dus & 3us de Lotharingio, cuniculis ſubterraneis, ſaxis, ponto, hoſtibus, & Aſia. 4tus & 5tus de catenis, ſubdibus, uncis, draconibus, tigribus & crocodilis. 6us, 7us, 8us, 9us, de Gomorrha, de Babylone, Babele, & quodum domi ſuæ peregrino. 10us, aliquid de quodam Pocockio. 11us, 12us, de Syriâ, Solymâ. 13us, 14us, de Hoſeâ, & quercu, & de juvene quodam valde ſene. 15us, 16us, de Ætnâ,

Ætnâ, & quomodo Ætna Pocockio ſit valde ſimilis. 17us, 18us, de tubâ, aſtro, umbrâ, flammis, rotis, Pocockio non neglecto. Cætera de Chriſtianis, Ottomanis, Babyloniis, Arabibus, & graviſſimâ agrorum melancholiâ; de Cæſare *Flacco* *, Neſtore, & miſerando juvenis cujuſdam florentiſſimi fato, anno ætatis ſuæ centeſimo præmaturè abrepto. Quæ omnia cum accuratè expenderis, neceſſe eſt ut Odem hanc meam admirandâ planè varietati conſtare fateaſis. Subito ad Batavos proficiſcor, lauro ab illis donandus. Prius vero Pembrochienſes voco ad certamen Poeticum. Vale.

Illuſtriſſima tua deoſculor crura.

E. SMITH.

* Pro *Flacco*, animo paulo attentiore, ſcripſiſſem *Marone*.

D U K E.

OF Mr. RICHARD DUKE I can find few memorials. He was bred at Weſtminſter * and Cambridge *; and Jacob relates, that he was ſome time tutor to the duke of Richmond.

He appears from his writings to have been not ill qualified for poetical compoſitions; and being conſcious of his powers, when he left the univerſity he enliſted himſelf among the wits. He was the familiar friend of Otway; and was engaged, among other popular names, in the tranſlations of Ovid and Juvenal. In his *Review*, though unfiniſhed, are ſome vigorous lines. His poems are not below medio-

* He was admitted there in 1670; was elected to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1675; and took his Maſter's degree in 1682 N.

crity;

crity; nor have I found much in them to be praiſed *.

With the Wit he ſeems to have ſhared the diſſoluteneſs of the times: for ſome of his compoſitions are ſuch as he muſt have reviewed with deteſtation in his later days, when he publiſhed thoſe Sermons which *Felton* has commended.

Perhaps, like ſome other fooliſh young men, he rather talked than lived viciouſly, in an age when he that would be thought a Wit was afraid to ſay his prayers; and whatever might have been bad in the firſt part of his life, was ſurely condemned and reformed by his better judgment.

In 1683, being then maſter of arts, and fellow of Trinity College in Cambridge, he wrote a poem on the marriage of the Lady Anne with George Prince of Denmark.

He took orders; and being made prebendary of Glouceſter, became a proctor in convocation

* They make part of a volume publiſhed by Tonſon in 8vo, 1717, containing the poems of the earl of Roſcommon, and the duke of Buckingham's eſſay on poetry, but were firſt publiſhed in Dryden's miſcellany, as were moſt, if not all, of the poems in that collection. H.

for

for that church, and chaplain to Queen Anne.

In 1710, he was preſented by the biſhop of Wincheſter to the wealthy living of Witney in Oxfordſhire, which he enjoyed but a few months. On February 10, 1710-11, having returned from an entertainment, he was found dead the next morning. His death is mentioned in Swift's Journal.

K I N G.

WILLIAM KING was born in London in 1663; the ſon of Ezekiel King, a gentleman. He was allied to the family of Clarendon.

From Weſtminſter-ſchool, where he was a ſcholar on the foundation under the care of Dr. Buſby, he was at eighteen elected to Chriſt-church, in 1681; where he is ſaid to have proſecuted his ſtudies with ſo much intenſeneſs and activity, that before he was eight years ſtanding, he had read over, and made remarks upon, twenty-two thouſand odd hundred books and manuſcripts. The books were certainly not very long, the manuſcripts not very difficult, nor the remarks very large; for the calculator will find that he diſpatched ſeven a day, for

for every day of his eight years; with a remnant that more than ſatisfies moſt other ſtudents. He took his degree in the moſt expenſive manner, as a *grand compounder*; whence it is inferred that he inherited a conſiderable fortune.

In 1688, the ſame year in which he was made maſter of arts, he publiſhed a confutation of Varillas's account of Wicliffe; and, engaging in the ſtudy of the Civil Law, became doctor in 1692, and was admitted advocate at Doctors Commons.

He had already made ſome tranſlations from the French, and written ſome humorous and ſatirical pieces; when, in 1694, Moleſworth publiſhed his *Account of Denmark*, in which he treats the Danes and their monarch with great contempt; and takes the opportunity of inſinuating thoſe wild principles, by which he ſuppoſes liberty to be eſtabliſhed, and by which his adverſaries ſuſpect that all ſubordination and government is endangered.

This book offended prince George; and the Daniſh miniſter preſented a memorial againſt it. The principles of its author did not pleaſe Dr. King, and therefore he undertook to confute part, and laugh at the reſt. The contro-

verſy

verſy is now forgotten; and books of this kind ſeldom live long, when intereſt and reſentment have ceaſed.

In 1697 he mingled in the controverſy between Boyle and Bentley; and was one of thoſe who tried what Wit could perform in oppoſition to Learning, on a queſtion which Learning only could decide.

In 1699 was publiſhed by him *A Journey to London*, after the method of Dr. *Martin Liſter*, who had publiſhed *A Journey to Paris*. And in 1700 he ſatiriſed the Royal Society, at leaſt Sir *Hans Sloane* their preſident, in two dialogues, intituled *The Tranſactioneer*.

Though he was a regular advocate in the courts of civil and canon law, he did not love his profeſſion, nor indeed any kind of buſineſs which interrupted his voluptuary dreams, or forced him to rouſe from that indulgence in which only he could find delight. His reputation as a civilian was yet maintained by his judgements in the courts of Delegates, and raiſed very high by the addreſs and knowledge which he diſcovered in 1700, when he defended the earl of Angleſea againſt his lady, afterwards

wards dutcheſs of Buckinghamſhire, who ſued for a divorce, and obtained it.

The expence of his pleaſures, and neglect of buſineſs, had now leſſened his revenues; and he was willing to accept of a ſettlement in Ireland, where, about 1702, he was made judge of the admiralty, commiſſioner of the prizes, keeper of the records in Birmingham's tower, and vicar-general to Dr. Marſh the primate.

But it is vain to put wealth within the reach of him who will not ſtretch out his hand to take it. King ſoon found a friend, as idle and thoughtleſs as himſelf, in *Upton*, one of the judges, who had a pleaſant houſe called Mountown, near Dublin, to which King frequently retired; delighting to neglect his intereſt, forget his cares, and deſert his duty.

Here he wrote *Mully of Mountown*, a poem; by which, though fanciful readers in the pride of ſagacity have given it a political interpretation, was meant originally no more than it expreſſed, as it was dictated only by the author's delight in the quiet of *Mountown*.

In 1708, when lord Wharton was ſent to govern Ireland, King returned to London, with his poverty, his idleneſs, and his wit; and pub-

publiſhed ſome eſſays called *Uſeful Tranſactions*. His *Voyage to the Iſland of Cajamai* is particularly commended. He then wrote the *Art of Love*, a poem remarkable, notwithſtanding its title, for purity of ſentiment; and in 1709 imitated Horace in an *Art of Cookery*, which he publiſhed, with ſome letters to Dr. Liſter.

In 1710, he appeared, as a lover of the Church, on the ſide of Sacheverell; and was ſuppoſed to have concurred at leaſt in the projection of *The Examiner*. His eyes were open to all the operations of Whiggiſm; and he beſtowed ſome ſtrictures upon Dr. Kennet's adulatory ſermon at the funeral of the duke of Devonſhire.

The *Hiſtory of the Heathen Gods*, a book compoſed for ſchools, was written by him in 1711. The work is uſeful; but might have been produced without the powers of King. The ſame year he publiſhed *Ruſinus*, an hiſtorical eſſay, and a poem, intended to diſpoſe the nation to think as he thought of the duke of Marlborough and his adherents.

In 1711, competence, if not plenty, was again put into his power. He was, without the trouble of attendance, or the mortification

of

of a requeſt, made gazetteer. Swift, Freind, Prior, and other men of the ſame party, brought him the key of the gazetteer's office. He was now again placed in a profitable employment, and again threw the benefit away. An Act of Inſolvency made his buſineſs at that time particularly troubleſome; and he would not wait till hurry ſhould be at an end, but impatiently reſigned it, and returned to his wonted indigence and amuſements.

One of his amuſements at Lambeth, where he reſided, was to mortify Dr. Teniſon, the archbiſhop, by a publick feſtivity, on the ſurrender of Dunkirk to Hill; an event with which Teniſon's political bigotry did not ſuffer him to be delighted. King was reſolved to counteract his ſullenneſs, and at the expence of a few barrels of ale filled the neighbourhood with honeſt merriment.

In the Autumn of 1712 his health declined; he grew weaker by degrees, and died on Chriſtmas-day. Though his life had not been without irregularity, his principles were pure and orthodox, and his death was pious.

After this relation, it will be naturally ſuppoſed that his poems were rather the amuſe-

ments

ments of idleneſs than efforts of ſtudy; that he endeavoured rather to divert than aſtoniſh; that his thought ſeldom aſpired to ſublimity; and that, if his verſe was eaſy and his images familiar, he attained what he deſired. His purpoſe is to be merry; but perhaps, to enjoy his mirth, it may be ſometimes neceſſary to think well of his opinions.

SPRAT.

THOMAS SPRAT was born in 1636, at Tallaton in Devonſhire, the ſon of a clergyman; and having been educated, as he tells of himſelf, not at Weſtminſter or Eaton, but at a little ſchool by the churchyard ſide, became a commoner of Wadham College in Oxford in 1651; and, being choſen ſcholar next year, proceeded through the uſual academical courſe; and in 1657 became maſter of arts. He obtained a fellowſhip, and commenced poet.

In 1659, his poem on the death of Oliver was publiſhed, with thoſe of Dryden and Waller. In his dedication to Dr. Wilkins he appears a very willing and liberal encomiaſt, both of the living and the dead. He implores his

his patron's excuſe of his verſes, both as falling "ſo infinitely below the full and ſublime "genius of that excellent poet who made this "way of writing free of our nation," and being "ſo little equal and proportioned to the "renown of a prince on whom they were "written; ſuch great actions and lives deſerv-"ing to be the ſubject of the nobleſt pens and "moſt divine phanſies." He proceeds: "Hav-"ing ſo long experienced your care and indul-"gence, and been formed, as it were, by your "own hands, not to entitle you to any thing "which my meanneſs produces, would be not "only injuſtice, but ſacrilege."

He publiſhed the ſame year a poem on the *Plague of Athens*; a ſubject of which it is not eaſy to ſay what could recommend it. To theſe he added afterwards a poem on Mr. Cowley's death.

After the Reſtoration he took orders, and by Cowley's recommendation was made chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham, whom he is ſaid to have helped in writing the *Rehearſal*. He was likewiſe chaplain to the king.

As he was the favourite of Wilkins, at whoſe houſe began thoſe philoſophical conferences and

enquiries, which in time produced the Royal Society, he was conſequently engaged in the ſame ſtudies, and became one of the fellows; and when, after their incorporation, ſomething ſeemed neceſſary to reconcile the publick to the new inſtitution, he undertook to write its hiſtory, which he publiſhed in 1667. This is one of the few books which ſelection of ſentiment and elegance of diction have been able to preſerve, though written upon a ſubject flux and tranſitory. The Hiſtory of the Royal Society is now read, not with the wiſh to know what they were then doing, but how their Tranſactions are exhibited by Sprat.

In the next year he publiſhed *Obſervations on Sorbiere's Voyage into England, in a Letter to Mr. Wren.* This is a work not ill performed; but perhaps rewarded with at leaſt its full proportion of praiſe.

In 1668 he publiſhed Cowley's Latin poems, and prefixed in Latin the Life of the Author; which he afterwards amplified, and placed before Cowley's Engliſh works, which were by will committed to his care.

Eccleſiaſtical benefices now fell faſt upon him. In 1668 he became a prebendary of Weſtmin-

ſter,

ſter, and had afterwards the church of St. Margaret, adjoining to the Abbey. He was in 1680 made canon of Windſor, in 1683 dean of Weſtminſter, and in 1684 biſhop of Rocheſter.

The Court having thus a claim to his diligence and gratitude, he was required to write the Hiſtory of the Ryehouſe Plot; and in 1685 publiſhed *A true Account and Declaration of the horrid Conſpiracy againſt the late King, his preſent Majeſty, and the preſent Government*; a performance which he thought convenient, after the Revolution, to extenuate and excuſe.

The ſame year, being clerk of the cloſet to the king, he was made dean of the chapel-royal; and the year afterwards received the laſt proof of his maſter's confidence, by being appointed one of the commiſſioners for eccleſiaſtical affairs. On the critical day, when the *Declaration* diſtinguiſhed the true ſons of the church of England, he ſtood neuter, and permitted it to be read at Weſtminſter; but preſſed none to violate his conſcience; and, when the biſhop of London was brought before them, gave his voice in his favour.

Thus far he ſuffered intereſt or obedience to carry him; but further he refuſed to go. When he found that the powers of the eccleſiaſtical commiſſion were to be exerciſed againſt thoſe who had refuſed the Declaration, he wrote to the lords, and other commiſſioners, a formal profeſſion of his unwillingneſs to exerciſe that authority any longer, and withdrew himſelf from them. After they had read his letter, they adjourned for ſix months, and ſcarcely ever met afterwards.

When king James was frighted away, and a new government was to be ſettled, Sprat was one of thoſe who conſidered, in a conference, the great queſtion, whether the crown was vacant; and manfully ſpoke in favour of his old maſter.

He complied, however, with the new eſtabliſhment, and was left unmoleſted: but in 1692 a ſtrange attack was made upon him by one *Robert Young* and *Stephen Blackhead*, both men convicted of infamous crimes, and both, when the ſcheme was laid, priſoners in Newgate. Theſe men drew up an Aſſociation, in which they whoſe names were ſubſcribed declared their reſolution to reſtore king James; to ſeize the

the princeſs of Orange, dead or alive, and to be ready with thirty thouſand men to meet king James when he ſhould land. To this they put the names of Sancroft, Sprat, Marlborough, Saliſbury, and others. The copy of Dr. Sprat's name was obtained by a fictitious requeſt, to which an anſwer *in his own hand* was deſired. His hand was copied ſo well, that he confeſſed it might have deceived himſelf. Blackhead, who had carried the letter, being ſent again with a plauſible meſſage, was very curious to ſee the houſe, and particularly importunate to be let into the ſtudy; where, as is ſuppoſed, he deſigned to leave the Aſſociation. This however was denied him, and he dropt it in a flower-pot in the parlour.

Young now laid an information before the Privy Council; and May 7, 1692, the biſhop was arreſted, and kept at a meſſenger's under a a ſtrict guard eleven days. His houſe was ſearched, and directions were given that the flower-pots ſhould be inſpected. The meſſengers however miſſed the room in which the paper was left. Blackhead went therefore a third

time; and finding his paper where he had left it, brought it away.

The biſhop, having been enlarged, was, on June the 10th and 13th, examined again before the Privy Council, and confronted with his accuſers. Young perſiſted, with the moſt obdurate impudence, againſt the ſtrongeſt evidence; but the reſolution of Blackhead by degrees gave way. There remained at laſt no doubt of the biſhop's innocence, who, with great prudence and diligence, traced the progreſs, and detected the characters of the two informers, and publiſhed an account of his own examination, and deliverance; which made ſuch an impreſſion upon him, that he commemorated it through life by an yearly day of thankſgiving.

With what hope, or what intereſt, the villains had contrived an accuſation which they muſt know themſelves utterly unable to prove, was never diſcovered.

After this, he paſſed his days in the quiet exerciſe of his function. When the cauſe of Sacheverell put the publick in commotion, he honeſtly appeared among the friends of the church,

church. He lived to his ſeventy-ninth year, and died May 20, 1713.

Burnet is not very favourable to his memory; but he and Burnet were old rivals. On ſome publick occaſion they both preached before the houſe of commons. There prevailed in thoſe days an indecent cuſtom; when the preacher touched any favourite topick in a manner that delighted his audience, their approbation was expreſſed by a loud *hum*, continued in proportion to their zeal or pleaſure. When Burnet preached, part of his congregation *hummed* ſo loudly and ſo long, that he ſat down to enjoy it, and rubbed his face with his handkerchief. When Sprat preached, he likewiſe was honoured with the like animating *hum*; but he ſtretched out his hand to the congregation, and cried, "Peace, peace, I pray you, peace."

This I was told in my youth by my father, an old man, who had been no careleſs obſerver of the paſſages of thoſe times.

Burnet's ſermon, ſays Salmon, was remarkable for ſedition, and Sprat's for loyalty. Burnet had the thanks of the houſe; Sprat had no thanks; but a good living from the king; which,

which, he ſaid, was of as much value as the thanks of the Commons.

The works of Sprat, beſides his few poems, are, The Hiſtory of the Royal Society, The Life of Cowley, The Anſwer to Sorbiere, The Hiſtory of the Rye-houſe Plot, The Relation of his own Examination, and a volume of Sermons. I have heard it obſerved, with great juſtneſs, that every book is of a different kind, and that each has its diſtinct and characteriſtical excellence.

My buſineſs is only with his poems. He conſidered Cowley as a model; and ſuppoſed that as he was imitated, perfection was approached. Nothing therefore but Pindarick liberty was to be expected. There is in his few productions no want of ſuch conceits as he thought excellent; and of thoſe our judgement may be ſettled by the firſt that appears in his praiſe of Cromwell, where he ſays that Cromwell's "fame, like man, will grow white as it "grows old."

HALIFAX.

HALIFAX.

THE life of the Earl of Halifax was properly that of an artful and active ſtateſman, employed in balancing parties, contriving expedients, and combating oppoſition, and expoſed to the viciſſitudes of advancement and degradation; but in this collection, poetical merit is the claim to attention; and the account which is here to be expected may properly be proportioned not to his influence in the ſtate, but to his rank among the writers of verſe.

Charles Montague was born April 16, 1661, at Horton in Northamptonſhire, the ſon of Mr. George Montague, a younger ſon of the earl of Mancheſter. He was educated firſt in the country, and then removed to Weſtminſter;

ſter; where in 1677 he was choſen a king's ſcholar, and recommended himſelf to Buſby by his felicity in extemporary epigrams. He contracted a very intimate friendſhip with Mr. Stepney; and in 1682, when Stepney was elected at Cambridge, the election of Montague being not to proceed till the year following, he was afraid leſt by being placed at Oxford he might be ſeparated from his companion, and therefore ſolicited to be removed to Cambridge, without waiting for the advantages of another year.

It ſeems indeed time to wiſh for a removal; for he was already a ſchool-boy of one and twenty.

His relation Dr. Montague was then maſter of the college in which he was placed a fellow-commoner, and took him under his particular care. Here he commenced an acquaintance with the great Newton, which continued through his life, and was at laſt atteſted by a legacy.

In 1685, his verſes on the death of king Charles made ſuch impreſſion on the earl of Dorſet, that he was invited to town, and introduced by that univerſal patron to the other wits.

wits. In 1687, he joined with Prior in the *City Mouſe and Country Mouſe*, a burleſque of Dryden's *Hind and Panther*. He ſigned the invitation to the Prince of Orange, and ſat in the convention. He about the ſame time married the counteſs dowager of Mancheſter, and intended to have taken orders; but afterwards altering his purpoſe, he purchaſed for 1500l. the place of one of the clerks of the council.

After he had written his epiſtle on the victory of the *Boyne*, his patron Dorſet introduced him to king William with this expreſſion: "Sir, I have brought a *Mouſe* to wait on your "Majeſty." To which the king is ſaid to have replied, "You do well to put me in the "way of making a *Man* of him;" and ordered him a penſion of five hundred pounds. This ſtory, however current, ſeems to have been made after the event. The king's anſwer implies a greater acquaintance with our proverbial and familiar diction than king William could poſſibly have attained.

In 1691, being member in the houſe of commons, he argued warmly in favour of a law to grant the aſſiſtance of counſel in trials for

for high treaſon, and in the midſt of his ſpeech, falling into ſome confuſion, was for a while ſilent; but, recovering himſelf, obſerved, "how reaſonable it was to allow counſel to "men called as criminals before a court of "juſtice, when it appeared how much the pre-"ſence of that aſſembly could diſconcert one "of their own body *."

After this he roſe faſt into honours and employments, being made one of the commiſſioners of the treaſury and called to the privy council. In 1694, he became chancellor of the Exchequer; and the next year engaged in the great attempt of the re-coinage, which was in two years happily completed. In 1696, he projected the *general fund*, and raiſed the credit of the Exchequer; and, after enquiry concerning a grant of Iriſh crown-lands, it was determined by a vote of the commons, that Charles Montague, eſquire, *had deſerved his Majeſty's favour*. In 1698, being advanced to the firſt commiſſion of the treaſury, he was ap-

* This anecdote is related by Mr. Walpole, in his Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors, of the Earl of Shafteſbury, author of the Characteriſticks. E.

pointed

pointed one of the regency in the king's abſence: the next year he was made auditor of the Exchequer, and the year after created *baron Halifax*. He was however impeached by the commons; but the articles were diſmiſſed by the lords.

At the acceſſion of queen Anne he was diſmiſſed from the council; and in the firſt parliament of her reign was again attacked by the commons, and again eſcaped by the protection of the lords. In 1704, he wrote an anſwer to Bromley's ſpeech againſt occaſional conformity. He headed the Enquiry into the danger of the Church. In 1706, he propoſed and negotiated the Union with Scotland; and when the elector of Hanover received the garter, after the act had paſſed for ſecuring the Proteſtant Succeſſion, he was appointed to carry the enſigns of the order to the electoral court. He ſat as one of the judges of Sacheverell; but voted for a mild ſentence. Being now no longer in favour, he contrived to obtain a writ for ſummoning the electoral prince to parliament as duke of Cambridge.

At the queen's death he was appointed one of the regents; and at the acceſſion of George the

the Firſt was made earl of Halifax, knight of the garter, and firſt commiſſioner of the treaſury, with a grant to his nephew of the reverſion of the auditorſhip of the Exchequer. More was not to be had, and this he kept but a little while; for on the 19th of May, 1715, he died of an inflammation of his lungs.

Of him, who from a poet became a patron of poets, it will be readily believed that the works would not miſs of celebration. Addiſon began to praiſe him early, and was followed or accompanied by other poets; perhaps by almoſt all, except Swift and Pope; who forbore to flatter him in his life, and after his death ſpoke of him, Swift with ſlight cenſure, and Pope in the character Bufo with acrimonious contempt.

He was, as Pope ſays, "fed with dedica-"tions;" for Tickell affirms that no dedicator was unrewarded. To charge all unmerited praiſe with the guilt of flattery, and to ſuppoſe that the encomiaſt always knows and feels the falſehoods of his aſſertions, is ſurely to diſcover great ignorance of human nature and human life. In determinations depending not on rules,

rules, but on experience and comparison, judgement is always in some degree subject to affection. Very near to admiration is the wish to admire.

Every man willingly gives value to the praise which he receives, and considers the sentence passed in his favour as the sentence of discernment. We admire in a friend that understanding that selected us for confidence; we admire more, in a patron, that judgement which, instead of scattering bounty indiscriminately, directed it to us; and, if the patron be an author, those performances which gratitude forbids us to blame, affectation will easily dispose us to exalt.

To these prejudices, hardly culpable, interest adds a power always operating, though not always, because not willingly, perceived. The modesty of praise wears gradually away; and perhaps the pride of patronage may be in time so increased, that modest praise will no longer please.

Many a blandishment was practised upon Halifax, which he would never have known, had he had no other attractions than those

of his poetry, of which a ſhort time has withered the beauties. It would now be eſteemed no honour, by a contributor to the monthly bundles of verſes, to be told, that, in ſtrains either familiar or ſolemn, he ſings like Montague.

PARNELL.

THE Life of Dr. PARNELL is a taſk which I ſhould very willingly decline, ſince it has been lately written by Goldſmith, a man of ſuch variety of powers, and ſuch felicity of performance, that he always ſeemed to do beſt that which he was doing; a man who had the art of being minute without tediouſneſs, and general without confuſion; whoſe language was copious without exuberance, exact without conſtraint, and eaſy without weakneſs.

What ſuch an author has told, who would tell again? I have made an abſtract from his larger narrative: and have this gratification from my attempt, that it gives me an opportunity of paying due tribute to the memory of Goldſmith.

Τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἔχει θανόντων.

THOMAS PARNELL was the ſon of a commonwealthſman of the ſame name, who at the Reſtoration left Congleton in Cheſhire, where the family had been eſtabliſhed for ſeveral centuries, and, ſettling in Ireland, purchaſed an eſtate, which, with his lands in Cheſhire, deſcended to the poet, who was born at Dublin in 1679; and, after the uſual education at a grammar ſchool, was at the age of thirteen admitted into the College, where, in 1700, he became maſter of arts; and was the ſame year ordained a deacon, though under the canonical age, by a diſpenſation from the biſhop of Derry.

About three years afterwards he was made a prieſt; and in 1705 Dr. Aſhe, the biſhop of Clogher, conferred upon him the archdeaconry of Clogher. About the ſame time he married Mrs. Anne Minchin, an amiable lady, by whom he had two ſons who died young, and a daughter who long ſurvived him.

At the ejection of the Whigs, in the end of queen Anne's reign, Parnell was perſuaded to change his party, not without much cenſure from thoſe whom he forſook, and was received by the new miniſtry as a valuable reinforcement.

ment. When the earl of Oxford was told that Dr. Parnell waited among the crowd in the outer room, he went by the perſuaſion of Swift, with his treaſurer's ſtaff in his hand, to enquire for him, and to bid him welcome; and, as may be inferred from Pope's dedication, admitted him as a favourite companion to his convivial hours, but, as it ſeems often to have happened in thoſe times to the favourites of the great, without attention to his fortune, which, however, was in no great need of improvement.

Parnell, who did not want ambition or vanity, was deſirous to make himſelf conſpicuous, and to ſhew how worthy he was of high preferment. As he thought himſelf qualified to become a popular preacher, he diſplayed his elocution with great ſucceſs in the pulpits of London; but the queen's death putting an end to his expectations, abated his diligence: and Pope repreſents him as falling from that time into intemperance of wine. That in his latter life he was too much a lover of the bottle, is not denied; but I have heard it imputed to a cauſe more likely to obtain forgiveneſs from mankind, the untimely death of

a darling ſon; or, as others tell, the loſs of his wife, who died (1712) in the midſt of his expectations.

He was now to derive every future addition to his preferments from his perſonal intereſt with his private friends, and he was not long unregarded. He was warmly recommended by Swift to archbiſhop King, who gave him a prebend in 1713; and in May 1716 preſented him to the vicarage of Finglas in the dioceſe of Dublin, worth four hundred pounds a year. Such notice from ſuch a man inclines me to believe that the vice of which he has been accuſed was not groſs, or not notorious.

But his proſperity did not laſt long. His end, whatever was its cauſe, was now approaching. He enjoyed his preferment little more than a year; for in July 1717, in his thirty-eighth year, he died at Cheſter on his way to Ireland.

He ſeems to have been one of thoſe poets who take delight in writing. He contributed to the papers of that time, and probably publiſhed more than he owned. He left many compoſitions behind him, of which Pope ſelected thoſe which he thought beſt, and dedicated

dicated them to the earl of Oxford. Of theſe Goldſmith has given an opinion, and his criticiſm it is ſeldom ſafe to contradict. He beſtows juſt praiſe upon the *Riſe of Woman*, the *Fairy Tale*, and the *Pervigilium Veneris*; but has very properly remarked, that in the *Battle of Mice and Frogs* the Greek names have not in Engliſh their original effect.

He tells us, that the *Bookworm* is borrowed from *Beza*; but he ſhould have added, with modern applications: and when he diſcovers that *Gay Bacchus* is tranſlated from *Augurellus*, he ought to have remarked that the latter part is purely Parnell's. Another poem, *When Spring comes on*, is, he ſays, taken from the French. I would add, that the deſcription of *Barrenneſs*, in his verſes to Pope, was borrowed from *Secundus*; but lately ſearching for the paſſage which I had formerly read, I could not find it. The *Night-piece on Death* is indirectly preferred by Goldſmith to Gray's *Church-yard*; but, in my opinion, Gray has the advantage in dignity, variety, and originality of ſentiment. He obſerves, that the ſtory of the *Hermit* is in *More's Dialogues* and *Howell's Letters*, and ſuppoſes it to have been originally *Arabian*.

Goldſmith has not taken any notice of the *Elegy to the old Beauty*, which is perhaps the meaneſt; nor of the *Allegory on Man*, the happieſt of Parnell's performances. The hint of the *Hymn to Contentment* I ſuſpect to have been borrowed from Cleiveland.

The general character of Parnell is not great extent of comprehenſion, or fertility of mind. Of the little that appears ſtill leſs is his own. His praiſe muſt be derived from the eaſy ſweetneſs of his diction: in his verſes there is more happineſs than pains; he is ſpritely without effort, and always delights, though he never raviſhes; every thing is proper, yet every thing ſeems caſual. If there is ſome appearance of elaboration in the *Hermit*, the narrative, as it is leſs airy, is leſs pleaſing. Of his other compoſitions it is impoſſible to ſay whether they are the productions of Nature, ſo excellent as not to want the help of Art, or of Art ſo refined as to reſemble Nature.

This criticiſm relates only to the pieces publiſhed by Pope. Of the large appendages which I find in the laſt edition, I can only ſay that I know not whence they came, nor have ever enquired whither they are going. They ſtand upon the faith of the compilers.

GARTH.

GARTH.

SAMUEL GARTH was of a good family in Yorkſhire, and from ſome ſchool in his own country became a ſtudent at Peterhouſe in Cambridge, where he reſided till he commenced doctor of phyſick on July the 7th, 1691. He was examined before the College at London on March the 12th, 1691-2, and admitted fellow June 26th, 1693. He was ſoon ſo much diſtinguiſhed by his converſation and accompliſhments, as to obtain very extenſive practice; and, if a pamphlet of thoſe times may be credited, had the favour and confidence of one party, as Radcliffe had of the other.

He is always mentioned as a man of benevolence; and it is juſt to ſuppoſe that his deſire of helping the helpleſs diſpoſed him to ſo much

much zeal for the *Diſpenſary*; an undertaking of which ſome account, however ſhort, is proper to be given.

Whether what Temple ſays be true, that phyſicians have had more learning than the other faculties, I will not ſtay to enquire; but, I believe, every man has found in phyſicians great liberality, and dignity of ſentiment, very prompt effuſion of beneficence, and willingneſs to exert a lucrative art, where there is no hope of lucre. Agreeably to this character, the College of Phyſicians, in July 1687, publiſhed an edict, requiring all the fellows, candidates, and licentiates, to give gratuitous advice to the neighbouring poor.

This edict was ſent to the Court of Aldermen; and a queſtion being made to whom the appellation of the *poor* ſhould be extended, the College anſwered, that it ſhould be ſufficient to bring a teſtimonial from a clergyman officiating in the pariſh where the patient reſided.

After a year's experience, the phyſicians found their charity fruſtrated by ſome malignant oppoſition, and made to a great degree vain by the high price of phyſick; they therefore voted, in Auguſt 1688, that the laboratory of the College

lege ſhould be accommodated to the preparation of medicines, and another room prepared for their reception; and that the contributors to the expence ſhould manage the charity.

It was now expected that the Apothecaries would have undertaken the care of providing medicines; but they took another courſe. Thinking the whole deſign pernicious to their intereſt, they endeavoured to raiſe a faction againſt it in the College, and found ſome phyſicians mean enough to ſolicit their patronage, by betraying to them the counſels of the College. The greater part, however, enforced by a new edict, in 1694, the former order of 1687, and ſent it to the mayor and aldermen, who appointed a committee to treat with the College, and ſettle the mode of adminiſtering the charity.

It was deſired by the aldermen, that the teſtimonials of churchwardens and overſeers ſhould be admitted; and that all hired ſervants, and all apprentics to handicraftſmen, ſhould be conſidered as *poor*. This likewiſe was granted by the College.

It was then conſidered who ſhould diſtribute the medicines, and who ſhould ſettle their prices.

prices. The Phyſicians procured ſome apothecaries to undertake the diſpenſation, and offered that the Warden and Company of the apothecaries ſhould adjuſt the price. This offer was rejected; and the apothecaries who had engaged to aſſiſt the charity were conſidered as traytors to the company, threatened with the impoſition of troubleſome offices, and deterred from the performance of their engagements. The apothecaries ventured upon public oppoſition, and preſented a kind of remonſtrance againſt the deſign to the committee of the city, which the phyſicians condeſcended to confute: and at leaſt the traders ſeem to have prevailed among the ſons of trade; for the propoſal of the college having been conſidered, a paper of approbation was drawn up, but poſtponed and forgotten.

The phyſicians ſtill perſiſted; and in 1696 a ſubſcription was raiſed by themſelves, according to an agreement prefixed to the Diſpenſary. The poor were for a time ſupplied with medicines: for how long a time, I know not. The medicinal charity, like others, began with ardour, but ſoon remitted, and at laſt died gradually away.

About

About the time of the ſubſcription begins the action of the *Diſpenſary*. The Poem, as its ſubject was preſent and popular, co-operated with paſſions and prejudices then prevalent, and, with ſuch auxiliaries to its intrinſick merit, was univerſally and liberally applauded. It was on the ſide of charity againſt the intrigues of intereſt, and of regular learning againſt licentious uſurpation of medical authority, and was therefore naturally favoured by thoſe who read and can judge of poetry.

In 1697, Garth ſpoke that which is now called the *Harveian* Oration; which the authors of the Biographia mention with more praiſe than the paſſage quoted in their notes will fully juſtify. Garth, ſpeaking of the miſchiefs done by quacks, has theſe expreſſions: "Non tamen "telis vulnerat iſta agyrtarum coluvies, ſed "theriacâ quadam magis pernicioſa, non pyrio, "ſed pulvere neſcio quo exotico certat, non "globulis plumbeis, ſed pilulis æque lethalibus "interficit." This was certainly thought fine by the author, and is ſtill admired by his biographer. In October 1702 he became one of the cenſors of the College.

Garth,

Garth, being an active and zealous Whig, was a member of the Kit-cat club, and by conſequence familiarly known to all the great men of that denomination. In 1710, when the government fell into other hands, he writ to lord Godolphin, on his diſmiſſion, a ſhort poem, which was criticiſed in the *Examiner*, and ſo ſucceſsfully either defended or excuſed by Mr. Addiſon, that, for the ſake of the vindication, it ought to be preſerved.

At the acceſſion of the preſent Family his merits were acknowledged and rewarded. He was knighted with the ſword of his hero, Malborough; and was made phyſician in ordinary to the king, and phyſician-general to the army.

He then undertook an edition of Ovid's Metamorphoſes, tranſlated by ſeveral hands; which he recommended by a Preface, written with more oſtentation than ability: his notions are half-formed, and his materials immethodically confuſed. This was his laſt work. He died Jan. 18, 1717-18, and was buried at Harrow-on-the-Hill.

His perſonal character ſeems to have been ſocial and liberal. He communicated himſelf through a very wide extent of acquaintance; and

and though firm in a party, at a time when firmneſs included virulence, yet he imparted his kindneſs to thoſe who were not ſuppoſed to favour his principles. He was an early encourager of Pope, and was at once the friend of Addiſon and of Granville. He is accuſed of voluptuouſneſs and irreligion; and Pope, who ſays that "if ever there was a good "Chriſtian, without knowing himſelf to be ſo, "it was Dr. Garth," ſeems not able to deny what he is angry to hear and loth to confeſs.

Pope afterwards declared himſelf convinced that Garth died in the communion of the Church of Rome, having been privately reconciled. It is obſerved by Lowth, that there is leſs diſtance than is thought between ſcepticiſm and popery, and that a mind, wearied with perpetual doubt, willingly ſeeks repoſe in the boſom of an infallible church.

His poetry has been praiſed at leaſt equally to its merit. In the *Diſpenſary* there is a ſtrain of ſmooth and free verſification; but few lines are eminently elegant. No paſſages fall below mediocrity, and few riſe much above it. The plan ſeems formed without juſt proportion to the ſubject; the means and end have no neceſſary

ceſſary connection. *Reſnel*, in his Preface to *Pope's* Eſſay, remarks, that Garth exhibits no diſcrimination of characters; and that what any one ſays might with equal propriety have been ſaid by another. The general deſign is perhaps open to criticiſm; but the compoſition can ſeldom be charged with inaccuracy or negligence. The author never ſlumbers in ſelf-indulgence; his full vigour is always exerted; ſcarce a line is left unfiniſhed, nor is it eaſy to find an expreſſion uſed by conſtraint, or a thought imperfectly expreſſed. It was remarked by Pope, that the *Diſpenſary* had been corrected in every edition, and that every change was an improvement. It appears, however, to want ſomething of poetical ardour, and ſomething of general delectation; and therefore, ſince it has been no longer ſupported by accidental and extrinſick popularity, it has been ſcarcely able to ſupport itſelf.

ROWE.

NICHOLAS ROWE was born at Little Beckford in Bedfordſhire, in 1673. His family had long poſſeſſed a conſiderable eſtate, with a good houſe, at Lambertoun * in Devonſhire. The anceſtor from whom he deſcended in a direct line received the arms borne by his deſcendents for his bravery in the Holy War. His father, John Rowe, who was the firſt that quitted his paternal acres to practiſe any art of profit, profeſſed the law, and publiſhed Benlow's and Dalliſon's Reports in the Reign of James the Second, when, in oppoſition to the notions then diligently propagated, of diſpenſing power, he ventured to remark how low his authors rated the preroga-

* In the Villare, *Lamerton*. Orig. Edit.

tive. He was made a ſerjeant, and died April 30, 1692. He was buried in the Temple Church.

Nicholas was firſt ſent to a private ſchool at Highgate; and being afterward removed to Weſtminſter, was at twelve years * choſen one of the King's ſcholars. His maſter was Buſby, who ſuffered none of his ſcholars to let their powers lie uſeleſs; and his exerciſes in ſeveral languages are ſaid to have been written with uncommon degrees of excellence, and yet to have coſt him very little labour.

At ſixteen he had, in his father's opinion, made advances in learning ſufficient to qualify him for the ſtudy of law, and was entered a ſtudent of the Middle Temple, where for ſome time he read ſtatutes and reports with proficiency proportionate to the force of his mind, which was already ſuch that he endeavoured to comprehend law, not as a ſeries of precedents, or collection of poſitive precepts, but as a ſyſtem of rational government, and impartial juſtice.

When he was nineteen, he was by the death of his father left more to his own direc-

* He was not elected till 1688. N.

tion,

tion, and probably from that time ſuffered law gradually to give way to poetry. At twenty-five he produced *The Ambitious Stepmother*, which was received with ſo much favour, that he devoted himſelf from that time wholly to elegant literature.

His next tragedy (1702) was *Tamerlane*, in which, under the name of Tamerlane, he intended to characterize king William, and Lewis the Fourteenth under Bajazet. The virtues of Tamerlane ſeem to have been arbitrarily aſſigned him by his poet, for I know not that hiſtory gives any other qualities than thoſe which make a conqueror. The faſhion, however, of the time, was, to accumulate upon Lewis all that can raiſe horror and deteſtation; and whatever good was with-held from him, that it might not be thrown away, was beſtowed upon king William.

This was the tragedy which Rowe valued moſt, and that which probably, by the help of political auxiliaries, excited moſt applauſe; but occaſional poetry muſt often content itſelf with occaſional praiſe. Tamerlane has for a long time been acted only once a year, on the night when king William landed. Our quarrel

with Lewis has been long over, and it now gratifies neither zeal nor malice to ſee him painted with aggravated features, like a Saracen upon a ſign.

The *Fair Penitent*, his next production (1703), is one of the moſt pleaſing tragedies on the ſtage, where it ſtill keeps its turns of appearing, and probably will long keep them, for there is ſcarcely any work of any poet at once ſo intereſting by the fable, and ſo delightful by the language. The ſtory is domeſtick, and therefore eaſily received by the imagination, and aſſimilated to common life; the diction is exquiſitely harmonious, and ſoft or ſpritely as occaſion requires.

The character of *Lothario* ſeems to have been expanded by Richardſon into *Lovelace*; but he has excelled his original in the moral effect of the fiction. *Lothario*, with gaiety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be deſpiſed, retains too much of the ſpectator's kindneſs. It was in the power of Richardſon alone to teach us at once eſteem and deteſtation, to make virtuous reſentment overpower all the benevolence which wit, elegance, and courage, naturally

naturally excite; and to loſe at laſt the hero in the villain.

The fifth act is not equal to the former; the events of the drama are exhauſted, and little remains but to talk of what is paſt. It has been obſerved, that the title of the play does not ſufficiently correſpond with the behaviour of Caliſta, who at laſt ſhews no evident ſigns of repentance, but may be reaſonably ſuſpected of feeling pain from detection rather than from guilt, and expreſſes more ſhame than ſorrow, and more rage than ſhame.

His next (1706) was *Ulyſſes*; which, with the common fate of mythological ſtories, is now generally neglected. We have been too early acquainted with the poetical heroes, to expect any pleaſure from their revival; to ſhew them as they have already been ſhewn, is to diſguſt by repetition; to give them new qualities, or new adventures, is to offend by violating received notions.

The *Royal Convert* (1708) ſeems to have a better claim to longevity. The fable is drawn from an obſcure and barbarous age, to which fictions are more eaſily and properly adapted; for when objects are imperfectly ſeen, they

eaſily take forms from imagination. The ſcen lies among our anceſtors in our own country, and therefore very eaſily catches attention. *Rodogune* is a perſonage truly tragical, of high ſpirit, and violent paſſions, great with tempeſtuous dignity, and wicked with a ſoul that would have been heroic if it had been virtuous. The motto ſeems to tell that this play was not ſucceſsful.

Rowe does not always remember what his characters require. In *Tamerlane* there is ſome ridiculous mention of the God of Love; and Rodogune, a ſavage Saxon, talks of Venus, and the eagle that bears the thunder of Jupiter.

This play diſcovers its own date, by a prediction of the *Union*, in imitation of Cranmer's prophetick promiſes to *Henry the Eighth*. The anticipated bleſſings of union are not very naturally introduced, nor very happily expreſſed.

He once (1706) tried to change his hand. He ventured on a comedy, and produced the *Biter*; with which, though it was unfavourably treated by the audience, he was himſelf delighted; for he is ſaid to have ſat in the houſe, laughing

laughing with great vehemence, whenever he had in his own opinion produced a jeſt. But finding that he and the publick had no ſympathy of mirth, he tried at lighter ſcenes no more.

After the Royal Convert (1714) appeared *Jane Shore*, written, as its author profeſſes, *in imitation of Shakſpeare's ſtyle*. In what he thought himſelf an imitator of Shakſpeare, it is not eaſy to conceive. The numbers, the diction, the ſentiments, and the conduct, every thing in which imitation can conſiſt, are remote in the utmoſt degree from the manner of Shakſpeare; whoſe dramas it reſembles only as it is an Engliſh ſtory, and as ſome of the perſons have their names in hiſtory. This play, conſiſting chiefly of domeſtic ſcenes and private diſtreſs, lays hold upon the heart. The wife is forgiven becauſe ſhe repents, and the huſband is honoured becauſe he forgives. This, therefore, is one of thoſe pieces which we ſtill welcome on the ſtage.

His laſt tragedy (1715) was *Lady Jane Grey*. This ſubject had been choſen by Mr. Smith, whoſe papers were put into Rowe's hands ſuch as he deſcribes them in his preface.

This play has likewiſe ſunk into oblivion From this time he gave nothing more to the ſtage.

Being by a competent fortune exempted from any neceſſity of combating his inclination, he never wrote in diſtreſs, and therefore does not appear to have ever written in haſte. His works were finiſhed to his own approbation, and bear few marks of negligence or hurry. It is remarkable, that his prologues and epilogues are all his own, though he ſometimes ſupplied others; he afforded help, but did not ſolicit it.

As his ſtudies neceſſarily made him acquainted with Shakſpeare, and acquaintance produced veneration, he undertook (1709) an edition of his works, from which he neither received much praiſe, nor ſeems to have expected it; yet, I believe, thoſe who compare it with former copies will find that he has done more than he promiſed; and that, without the pomp of notes or boaſts of criticiſm, many paſſages are happily reſtored. He prefixed a life of the author, ſuch as tradition then almoſt expiring could ſupply; and a preface;

face *; which cannot be ſaid to diſcover much profundity or penetration. He at leaſt contributed to the popularity of his author.

He was willing enough to improve his fortune by other arts than poetry. He was under ſecretary for three years when the duke of Queenſberry was ſecretary of ſtate, and afterwards applied to the earl of Oxford for ſome publick employment †. Oxford enjoined him to ſtudy Spaniſh; and when, ſome time afterwards, he came again, and ſaid that he had maſtered it, diſmiſſed him with this congratulation, "Then, Sir, I envy you "the pleaſure of reading Don Quixot in the "original."

This ſtory is ſufficiently atteſted; but why Oxford, who deſired to be thought a favourer of literature, ſhould thus inſult a man of acknowledged merit; or how Rowe, who was ſo keen a Whig ‡ that he did not willingly converſe with men of the oppoſite party, could aſk preferment from Oxford; it is not now

* Mr. Rowe's Preface, however, is not diſtinct, as it might be ſuppoſed from this paſſage from the Life. E.

† Spence.

‡ Spence.

poſſible

poſſible to diſcover. Pope, who told the ſtory, did not ſay on what occaſion the advice was given; and, though he owned Rowe's diſappointment, doubted whether any injury was intended him, but thought it rather Lord Oxford's *odd way*.

It is likely that he lived on diſcontented through the reſt of queen Anne's reign; but the time came at laſt when he found kinder friends. At the acceſſion of king George he was made poet laureat; I am afraid by the ejection of poor Nahum Tate, who (1716) died in the Mint, where he was forced to ſeek ſhelter by extreme poverty. He was made likewiſe one of the land ſurveyors of the cuſtoms of the port of London. The prince of Wales choſe him clerk of his council; and the lord chancellor Parker, as ſoon as he received the ſeals, appointed him, unaſked, ſecretary of the preſentations. Such an accumulation of employments undoubtedly produced a very conſiderable revenue.

Having already tranſlated ſome parts of *Lucan's Pharſalia*, which had been publiſhed in the Miſcellanies, and doubtleſs received many praiſes, he undertook a verſion of the whole work,

work, which he lived to finiſh, but not to publiſh. It ſeems to have been printed under the care of Dr Welwood, who prefixed the author's life, in which is contained the following character:

"As to his perſon, it was graceful and well-"made: his face regular, and of a manly "beauty. As his ſoul was well-lodged, ſo its "rational and animal faculties excelled in a high "degree. He had a quick and fruitful inven-"tion, a deep penetration, and a large com-"paſs of thought, with ſingular dexterity and "eaſineſs in making his thoughts to be under-"ſtood. He was maſter of moſt parts of polite "learning, eſpecially the claſſical authors, both "Greek and Latin; underſtood the French, "Italian, and Spaniſh languages; and ſpoke "the firſt fluently, and the other two tolerably "well.

"He had likewiſe read moſt of the Greek "and Roman hiſtories in their original lan-"guages, and moſt that are wrote in Engliſh, "French, Italian, and Spaniſh. He had a "good taſte in philoſophy; and, having a "firm impreſſion of religion upon his mind, "he took great delight in divinity and eccleſi-

"aſtical

" aſtical hiſtory, in both which he made great " advances in the times he retired into the " country, which was frequent. He expreſſed, " on all occaſions, his full perſuaſion of the " truth of Revealed Religion; and being a " ſincere member of the eſtabliſhed church " himſelf, he pitied, but condemned not, thoſe " that diſſented from it. He abhorred the " principles of perſecuting men upon the ac- " count of their opinions in religion; and " being ſtrict in his own, he took it not upon " him to cenſure thoſe of another perſuaſion. " His converſation was pleaſant, witty, and " learned, without the leaſt tincture of affec- " tation or pedantry; and his inimitable man- " ner of diverting and enlivening the company " made it impoſſible for any one to be out of " humour when he was in it. Envy and de- " traction ſeemed to be entirely foreign to his " conſtitution; and whatever provocations he " met with at any time, he paſſed them over " without the leaſt thought of reſentment or " revenge. As Homer had a Zoilus, ſo Mr. " Rowe had ſometimes his: for there were " not wanting malevolent people, and preten- " ders to poetry too, that would now-and-then

" bark

" bark at his beſt performances; but he was " ſo much conſcious of his own genius, and " had ſo much goodnature, as to forgive them; " nor could he ever be tempted to return them " an anſwer.

" The love of learning and poetry made him " not the leſs fit for buſineſs, and nobody ap- " plied himſelf cloſer to it, when it required " his attendance. The late duke of Queenſ- " berry, when he was ſecretary of ſtate, made " him his ſecretary for public affairs; and " when that truly great man came to know " him well, he was never ſo pleaſed as when " Mr. Rowe was in his company. After the " duke's death, all avenues were ſtopped to his " preferment; and during the reſt of that reign, " he paſſed his time with the Muſes and his " books, and ſometimes the converſation of " his friends.

" When he had juſt got to be eaſy in his " fortune, and was in a fair way to make it " better, death ſwept him away, and in him " deprived the world of one of the beſt men, " as well as one of the beſt geniuſes, of the " age. He died like a Chriſtian and a Philoſo- " pher, in charity with all mankind, and

" with

" with an abſolute reſignation to the will of " God. He kept up his good-humour to the " laſt; and took leave of his wife and friends, " immediately before his laſt agony, with the " ſame tranquillity of mind, and the ſame in- " difference for life, as though he had been " upon taking but a ſhort journey. He was " twice married; firſt to a daughter of Mr. " Parſons, one of the auditors of the revenue; " and afterwards to a daughter of Mr. Deveniſh, " of a good family in Dorſetſhire. By the firſt " he had a ſon; and by the ſecond, a daugh- " ter, married afterwards to Mr. Fane. He " died the ſixth of December, 1718, in the " forty-fifth year of his age: and was buried " the nineteenth of the ſame month in Weſt- " minſter-abbey, in the aiſle where many of " our Engliſh poets are interred, over-againſt " Chaucer, his body being attended by a ſelect " number of his friends, and the dean and " choir officiating at the funeral."

To this character, which is apparently given with the fondneſs of a friend, may be added the teſtimony of Pope, who ſays, in a letter to Blount, " Mr. Rowe accompanied me, and " paſſed a week in the Foreſt. I need not tell " you

"you how much a man of his turn enter-
"tained me; but I muſt acquaint you, there
"is a vivacity and gaiety of diſpoſition, almoſt
"peculiar to him, which make it impoſſible
"to part from him without that uneaſineſs
"which generally ſucceeds all our pleaſure."

Pope has left behind him another mention of his companion, leſs advantageous, which is thus reported by Dr. Warburton:

"Rowe, in Mr. Pope's opinion, maintained
"a decent character, but had no art. Mr.
"Addiſon was juſtly offended with ſome be-
"haviour which aroſe from that want, and
"eſtranged himſelf from him; which Rowe
"felt very ſeverely. Mr. Pope, their com-
"mon friend, knowing this, took an oppor-
"tunity, at ſome juncture of Mr. Addiſon's
"advancement, to tell him how poor Rowe
"was grieved at his diſpleaſure, and what ſa-
"tisfaction he expreſſed at Mr. Addiſon's good
"fortune, which he expreſſed ſo naturally,
"that he (Mr. Pope) could not but think him
"ſincere. Mr. Addiſon replied, 'I do not
"ſuſpect that he feigned; but the levity of his
"heart is ſuch, that he is ſtruck with any new
"adventure; and it would affect him juſt in

"the

" the ſame manner, if he heard I was going to " be hanged.'—Mr. Pope ſaid, he could not " deny but Mr. Addiſon underſtood Rowe " well."

This cenſure time has not left us the power of confirming or refuting; but obſervation daily ſhews, that much ſtreſs is not to be laid on hyperbolical accuſations, and pointed ſentences, which even he that utters them deſires to be applauded rather than credited. Addiſon can hardly be ſuppoſed to have meant all that he ſaid. Few characters can bear the microſcopick ſcrutiny of wit quickened by anger; and perhaps the beſt advice to authors would be, that they ſhould keep out of the way of one another.

Rowe is chiefly to be conſidered as a tragick writer and a tranſlator. In his attempt at comedy he failed ſo ignominiouſly, that his *Biter* is not inſerted in his works; and his occaſional poems and ſhort compoſitions are rarely worthy of either praiſe or cenſure; for they ſeem the caſual ſports of a mind ſeeking rather to amuſe its leiſure than to exerciſe its powers.

In the conſtruction of his dramas, there is not much art; he is not a nice obſerver of the Unities.

Unities. He extends time and varies place as his convenience requires. To vary the place is not, in my opinion, any violation of Nature, if the change be made between the acts; for it is no leſs eaſy for the ſpectator to ſuppoſe himſelf at Athens in the ſecond act, than at Thebes in the firſt; but to change the ſcene, as is done by Rowe, in the middle of an act, is to add more acts to the play, ſince an act is ſo much of the buſineſs as is tranſacted without interruption. Rowe, by this licence, eaſily extricates himſelf from difficulties; as in *Jane Grey*, when we have been terrified with all the dreadful pomp of publick execution, and are wondering how the heroine or the poet will proceed, no ſooner has *Jane* pronounced ſome prophetick rhymes, than—paſs and be gone—the ſcene cloſes, and *Pembroke* and *Gardiner* are turned out upon the ſtage.

I know not that there can be found in his plays any deep ſearch into nature, any accurate diſcriminations of kindred qualities, or nice diſplay of paſſion in its progreſs; all is general and undefined. Nor does he much intereſt or affect the auditor, except in *Jane Shore*, who is always ſeen and heard with pity. *Alicia*

is a character of empty noiſe, with no reſemblance to real ſorrow or to natural madneſs.

Whence, then, has Rowe his reputation? From the reaſonableneſs and propriety of ſome of his ſcenes, from the elegance of his diction, and the ſuavity of his verſe. He ſeldom moves either pity or terrour, but he often elevates the ſentiments; he ſeldom pierces the breaſt, but he always delights the ear, and often improves the underſtanding.

His tranſlation of the *Golden Verſes*, and of the firſt book of *Quillet's* Poem, have nothing in them remarkable. The *Golden Verſes* are tedious.

The verſion of *Lucan* is one of the greateſt productions of Engliſh poetry; for there is perhaps none that ſo completely exhibits the genius and ſpirit of the original. *Lucan* is diſtinguiſhed by a kind of dictatorial or philoſophic dignity, rather, as Quintilian obſerves, declamatory than poetical; full of ambitious morality and pointed ſentences, compriſed in vigorous and animated lines. This character Rowe has very diligently and ſucceſsfully preſerved. His verſification, which is ſuch as his contemporaries practiſed, without

without any attempt at innovation or improvement, ſeldom wants either melody or force. His author's ſenſe is ſometimes a little diluted by additional infuſions, and ſometimes weakened by too much expanſion. But ſuch faults are to be expected in all tranſlations, from the conſtraint of meaſures and diſſimilitude of languages. The *Pharſalia* of Rowe deſerves more notice than it obtains, and as it is more read will be more eſteemed.

P. 95. l. 11. for "art," r. "heart."

ADDISON.

JOSEPH ADDISON was born on the firſt of May, 1672, at Milſton, of which his father, Lancelot Addiſon, was then rector, near Ambroſebury in Wiltſhire, and appearing weak and unlikely to live, he was chriſtened the ſame day. After the uſual domeſtick education, which, from the character of his father, may be reaſonably ſuppoſed to have given him ſtrong impreſſions of piety, he was committed to the care of Mr. Naiſh at Ambroſebury, and afterwards of Mr. Taylor at Saliſbury.

Not to name the ſchool or the maſters of men illuſtrious for literature, is a kind of hiſtorical fraud, by which honeſt fame is injuriouſly diminiſhed: I would therefore trace him through

through the whole proceſs of his education. In 1683, in the beginning of his twelfth year, his father, being made dean of Litchfield, naturally carried his family to his new reſidence, and, I believe, placed him for ſome time, probably not long, under Mr. Shaw, then maſter of the ſchool at Litchfield, father of the late Dr. Peter Shaw. Of this interval his biographers have given no account, and I know it only from a ſtory of a *barring-out*, told me, when I was a boy, by Andrew Corbet of Shropſhire, who had heard it from Mr. Pigot his uncle.

The practice of *barring-out* was a ſavage licence, practiſed in many ſchools to the end of the laſt century, by which the boys, when the periodical vacation drew near, growing petulant at the approach of liberty, ſome days before the time of regular receſs, took poſſeſſion of the ſchool, of which they barred the doors, and bade their maſter defiance from the windows. It is not eaſy to ſuppoſe that on ſuch occaſions the maſter would do more than laugh; yet, if tradition may be credited, he often ſtruggled hard to force or ſurpriſe the garriſon. The maſter, when Pigot was a ſchool-boy, was

barred-out at Litchfield, and the whole operation, as he ſaid, was planned and conducted by Addiſon.

To judge better of the probability of this ſtory, I have enquired when he was ſent to the Chartreux; but, as he was not one of thoſe who enjoyed the Founder's benefaction, there is no account preſerved of his admiſſion. At the ſchool of the Chartreux, to which he was removed either from that of Saliſbury or Litchfield, he purſued his juvenile ſtudies under the care of Dr. Ellis, and contracted that intimacy with Sir Richard Steele, which their joint labours have ſo effectually recorded.

Of this memorable friendſhip the greater praiſe muſt be given to Steele. It is not hard to love thoſe from whom nothing can be feared; and Addiſon never conſidered Steele as a rival; but Steele lived, as he confeſſes, under an habitual ſubjection to the predominating genius of Addiſon, whom he always mentioned with reverence, and treated with obſequiouſneſs.

Addiſon *, who knew his own dignity, could not always forbear to ſhew it, by playing a little

* Spence.

upon

upon his admirer; but he was in no danger of retort: his jeſts were endured without reſiſtance or reſentment.

But the ſneer of jocularity was not the worſt. Steele, whoſe imprudence of generoſity, or vanity of profuſion, kept him always incurably neceſſitous, upon ſome preſſing exigence, in an evil hour, borrowed an hundred pounds of his friend, probably without much purpoſe of repayment; but Addiſon, who ſeems to have had other notions of a hundred pounds, grew impatient of delay, and reclaimed his loan by an execution. Steele felt with great ſenſibility the obduracy of his creditor; but with emotions of ſorrow rather than of anger *.

In 1687 he was entered into Queen's College in Oxford, where, in 1689, the accidental peruſal of ſome Latin verſes gained him the

* This fact was communicated to Johnſon in my hearing by a perſon of unqueſtionable veracity, but whoſe name I am not at liberty to mention. He had it, as he told us, from lady Primroſe, to whom Steele related it with tears in his eyes. The late Dr. Stinton confirmed it to me, by ſaying, that he had heard it from Mr. Hooke, author of the Roman Hiſtory; and he, from Mr. Pope. H.

See Victor's Letters, vol. I. p. 328. this tranſaction ſomewhat differently related. E.

patronage of Dr. Lancaſter, afterwards provoſt of Queen's College; by whoſe recommendation he was elected into Magdalen College as a Demy, a term by which that ſociety denominates thoſe which are elſewhere called Scholars; young men, who partake of the founder's benefaction, and ſucceed in their order to vacant fellowſhips *.

Here he continued to cultivate poetry and criticiſm, and grew firſt eminent by his Latin compoſitions, which are indeed entitled to particular praiſe. He has not confined himſelf to the imitation of any ancient author, but has formed his ſtyle from the general language, ſuch as a diligent peruſal of the productions of different ages happened to ſupply.

His Latin compoſitions ſeem to have had much of his fondneſs; for he collected a ſecond volume of the *Muſæ Anglicanæ*, perhaps for a convenient receptacle, in which all his Latin pieces are inſerted, and where his Poem on the Peace has the firſt place. He afterwards preſented the collection to Boileau, who from that time "conceived," ſays Tickell, "an opinion

* He took the degree of M. A. Feb. 14, 1693.

"of

" of the Engliſh genius for poetry." Nothing is better known of Boileau, than that he had an injudicious and peeviſh contempt of modern Latin, and therefore his profeſſion of regard was probably the effect of his civility rather than approbation.

Three of his Latin poems are upon ſubjects on which perhaps he would not have ventured to have written in his own language. *The Battle of the Pigmies and Cranes*; *The Barometer*; and *a Bowling-green*. When the matter is low or ſcanty, a dead language, in which nothing is mean becauſe nothing is familiar, affords great conveniences; and by the ſonorous magnificence of Roman ſyllables, the writer conceals penury of thought, and want of novelty, often from the reader, and often from himſelf.

In his twenty-ſecond year he firſt ſhewed his power of Engliſh poetry, by ſome verſes addreſſed to Dryden; and ſoon afterwards publiſhed a tranſlation of the greater part of the Fourth Georgick upon Bees; after which, ſays Dryden, " my latter ſwarm is hardly " worth the hiving."

About the ſame time he compoſed the arguments prefixed to the ſeveral books of Dryden's Virgil;

Virgil; and produced an Eſſay on the Georgicks, juvenile, ſuperficial, and uninſtructive, without much either of the ſcholar's learning or the critick's penetration.

His next paper of verſes contained a character of the principal Engliſh poets, inſcribed to Henry Sacheverell, who was then, if not a poet, a writer of verſes *; as is ſhewn by his verſion of a ſmall part of Virgil's Georgicks, publiſhed in the Miſcellanies, and a Latin encomium on queen Mary, in the *Muſæ Anglicanæ*. Theſe verſes exhibit all the fondneſs of friendſhip; but on one ſide or the other, friend-

* A letter which I found among Dr. Johnſon's papers, dated in January 1784, from a lady in Wiltſhire, contains a diſcovery of ſome importance in literary hiſtory, viz. that by the initials H. S. prefixed to this poem, we are not to underſtand the famous Dr. Henry Sacheverell, whoſe trial is the moſt remarkable incident in his life. The information thus communicated is, that the verſes in queſtion were not an addreſs to the famous Dr. Sacheverell, but to a very ingenious gentleman of the ſame name, who died young, ſuppoſed to be a Mankſman, for that he wrote the hiſtory of the Iſle of Man.—That this perſon left his papers to Mr. Addiſon, and had formed a plan of a tragedy upon the death of Socrates.—The lady ſays, ſhe had this information from a Mr. Stephens, who was a fellow of Merton college, a contemporary, and intimate with Mr. Addiſon in Oxford, who died near 50 years ago, a prebendary of Wincheſter. H.

ſhip

ſhip was afterwards too weak for the malignity of faction.

In this poem is a very confident and diſcriminative character of Spenſer, whoſe work he had then never read *. So little ſometimes is criticiſm the effect of judgement. It is neceſſary to inform the reader, that about this time he was introduced by Congreve to Montague, then Chancellor of the Exchequer: Addiſon was then learning the trade of a courtier, and ſubjoined Montague as a poetical name to thoſe of Cowley and of Dryden.

By the influence of Mr. Montague, concurring, according to Tickell, with his natural modeſty, he was diverted from his original deſign of entering into holy orders. Montague alleged the corruption of men who engaged in civil employments without liberal education; and declared, that, though he was repreſented as an enemy to the Church, he would never do it any injury but by withholding Addiſon from it.

Soon after (in 1695) he wrote a poem to king William, with a rhyming introduction

* Spence.

addreſſed

addreſſed to lord Sommers. King William had no regard to elegance or literature; his ſtudy was only war; yet by a choice of miniſters, whoſe diſpoſition was very different from his own, he procured, without intention, a very liberal patronage to poetry. Addiſon was careſſed both by Sommers and Montague.

In 1697 appeared his Latin verſes on the peace of Ryſwick, which he dedicated to Montague, and which was afterwards called by Smith "the beſt Latin poem ſince the Æneid." Praiſe muſt not be too rigorouſly examined; but the performance cannot be denied to be vigorous and elegant.

Having yet no public employment, he obtained (in 1699) a penſion of three hundred pounds a-year, that he might be enabled to travel. He ſtaid a year at Blois *, probably to learn the French language; and then proceeded in his journey to Italy, which he ſurveyed with the eyes of a poet.

While he was travelling at leiſure, he was far from being idle; for he not only collected

* Spence.

his

his obſervations on the country, but found time to write his Dialogues on Medals, and four Acts of Cato. Such at leaſt is the relation of Tickell. Perhaps he only collected his materials, and formed his plan.

Whatever were his other employments in Italy, he there wrote the letter to lord Halifax, which is juſtly conſidered as the moſt elegant, if not the moſt ſublime, of his poetical productions. But in about two years he found it neceſſary to haſten home; being, as Swift informs us, diſtreſſed by indigence, and compelled to become the tutor of a travelling Squire, becauſe his penſion was not remitted.

At his return he publiſhed his Travels, with a dedication to lord Sommers. As his ſtay in foreign countries was ſhort, his obſervations are ſuch as might be ſupplied by a haſty view, and conſiſt chiefly in compariſons of the preſent face of the country with the deſcriptions left us by the Roman poets, from whom he made preparatory collections, though he might have ſpared the trouble, had he known that ſuch collections had been made twice before by Italian authors.

The

The moſt amuſing paſſage of his book is his account of the minute republick of San Marino; of many parts it is not a very ſevere cenſure to ſay, that they might have been written at home. His elegance of language, and variegation of proſe and verſe, however, gains upon the reader; and the book, though a while neglected, became in time ſo much the favourite of the publick, that before it was reprinted it roſe to five times its price.

When he returned to England (in 1702), with a meanneſs of appearance which gave teſtimony of the difficulties to which he had been reduced, he found his old patrons out of power, and was, therefore, for a time, at full leiſure for the cultivation of his mind, and a mind ſo cultivated gives reaſon to believe that little time was loſt.

But he remained not long neglected or uſeleſs. The victory at Blenheim (1704) ſpread triumph and confidence over the nation; and lord Godolphin, lamenting to lord Halifax, that it had not been celebrated in a manner equal to the ſubject, deſired him to propoſe it to ſome better poet. Halifax told him, that there was no encouragement for genius; that worthleſs

worthleſs men were unprofitably enriched with publick money, without any care to find or employ thoſe whoſe appearance might do honour to their country. To this Godolphin replied, that ſuch abuſes ſhould in time be rectified; and that, if a man could be found capable of the taſk then propoſed, he ſhould not want an ample recompenſe. Halifax then named Addiſon, but required that the Treaſurer ſhould apply to him in his own perſon. Godolphin ſent the meſſage by Mr. Boyle, afterwards lord Carlton; and Addiſon having undertaken the work, communicated it to the Treaſurer, while it was yet advanced no further than the ſimile of the Angel, and was immediately rewarded by ſucceeding Mr. Locke in the place of *Commiſſioner of Appeals*.

In the following year he was at Hanover with lord Halifax; and the year after he was made under-ſecretary of State, firſt to Sir Charles Hedges, and in a few months more to the earl of Sunderland.

About this time the prevalent taſte for Italian operas inclined him to try what would be the effect of a muſical Drama in our own language. He therefore wrote the opera of Roſamond,

mond, which, when exhibited on the ſtage, was either hiſſed or neglected; but truſting that the readers would do him more juſtice, he publiſhed it, with an inſcription to the dutcheſs of Marlborough; a woman without ſkill, or pretenſions to ſkill, in poetry or literature. His dedication was therefore an inſtance of ſervile abſurdity, to be exceeded only by Joſhua Barnes's dedication of a Greek Anacreon to the Duke.

His reputation had been ſomewhat advanced by *The Tender Huſband*, a comedy which Steele dedicated to him, with a confeſſion that he owed to him ſeveral of the moſt ſucceſsful ſcenes. To this play Addiſon ſupplied a prologue.

When the marquis of Wharton was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland, Addiſon attended him as his ſecretary; and was made keeper of the records in Birmingham's Tower, with a ſalary of three hundred pounds a-year. The office was little more than nominal, and the ſalary was augmented for his accommodation.

Intereſt and faction allow little to the operation of particular diſpoſitions, or private opinions.

nions. Two men of perſonal characters more oppoſite than thoſe of Wharton and Addiſon, could not eaſily be brought together. Wharton was impious, profligate, and ſhameleſs, without regard, or appearance of regard, to right and wrong: whatever is contrary to this, may be ſaid of Addiſon; but as agents of a party they were connected, and how they adjuſted their other ſentiments we cannot know.

Addiſon muſt however not be too haſtily condemned. It is not neceſſary to refuſe benefits from a bad man, when the acceptance implies no approbation of his crimes; nor has the ſubordinate officer any obligation to examine the opinions or conduct of thoſe under whom he acts, except that he may not be made the inſtrument of wickedneſs. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that Addiſon counteracted, as far as he was able, the malignant and blaſting influence of the Lieutenant, and that at leaſt by his intervention ſome good was done, and ſome miſchief prevented.

When he was in office, he made a law to himſelf, as Swift has recorded, never to remit his regular fees in civility to his friends:

"For," ſaid he, "I may have a hundred "friends; and, if my fee be two guineas, I "ſhall, by relinquiſhing my right, loſe two "hundred guineas, and no friend gain more "than two; there is therefore no proportion "between the good imparted and the evil ſuf-"fered."

He was in Ireland when Steele, without any communication of his deſign, began the publication of the Tatler: but he was not long concealed: by inſerting a remark on Virgil, which Addiſon had given him, he diſcovered himſelf. It is indeed not eaſy for any man to write upon literature, or common life, ſo as not to make himſelf known to thoſe with whom he familiarly converſes, and who are acquainted with his track of ſtudy, his favourite topick, his peculiar notions, and his habitual phraſes.

If Steele deſired to write in ſecret, he was not lucky; a ſingle month detected him. His firſt Tatler was publiſhed April 22 (1709), and Addiſon's contribution appeared May 26. Tickell obſerves, that the Tatler began and was concluded without his concurrence. This is doubtleſs literally true; but the work did not ſuffer much by his unconſciouſneſs of its commencement,

mencement, or his abſence at its ceſſation; for he continued his aſſiſtance to December 23, and the paper ſtopped on January 2. He did not diſtinguiſh his pieces by any ſignature; and I know not whether his name was not kept ſecret, till the papers were collected into volumes.

To the Tatler, in about two months, ſucceeded the Spectator; a ſeries of eſſays of the ſame kind, but written with leſs levity, upon a more regular plan, and publiſhed daily. Such an undertaking ſhewed the writers not to diſtruſt their own copiouſneſs of materials or facility of compoſition, and their performance juſtified their confidence. They found, however, in their progreſs, many auxiliaries. To attempt a ſingle paper was no terrifying labour; many pieces were offered, and many were received.

Addiſon had enough of the zeal of party, but Steele had at that time almoſt nothing elſe. The Spectator, in one of the firſt papers, ſhewed the political tenets of its authors; but a reſolution was ſoon taken, of courting general approbation by general topicks, and ſubjects on which faction had produced no diverſity of ſentiments; ſuch as literature, morality, and

familiar life. To this practice they adhered with few deviations. The ardour of Steele once broke out in praiſe of Marlborough; and when Dr. Fleetwood prefixed to ſome ſermons a preface, overflowing with whiggiſh opinions, that it might be read by the Queen*, it was reprinted in the Spectator.

To teach the minuter decencies and inferior duties, to regulate the practice of daily converſation, to correct thoſe depravities which are rather ridiculous than criminal, and remove thoſe grievances, which, if they produce no laſting calamities, impreſs hourly vexation, was firſt attempted by Caſa in his book of *Manners*, and Caſtiglione in his *Courtier*; two books yet celebrated in Italy for purity and elegance, and which, if they are now leſs read, are neglected only becauſe they have effected that reformation which their authors intended, and their precepts now are no longer wanted. Their uſefulneſs to the age in which they were

* This particular number of the Spectator, it is ſaid, was not publiſhed till 12 o'clock, that it might come out preciſely at the hour of her Majeſty's breakfaſt, and that no time might be left for deliberating about ſerving it up with that meal, as uſual. See edit. of the TATLER with notes, vol. VI. N° 271, *note*. p. 452, &c. N.

written

written is ſufficiently atteſted by the tranſlations which almoſt all the nations of Europe were in haſte to obtain.

This ſpecies of inſtruction was continued, and perhaps advanced by the French; among whom La Bruyere's Manners of the Age, though, as Boileau remarked, it is written without connection, certainly deſerves praiſe, for livelineſs of deſcription, and juſtneſs of obſervation.

Before the Tatler and Spectator, if the writers for the theatre are excepted, England had no maſters of common life. No writers had yet undertaken to reform either the ſavageneſs of neglect, or the impertinence of civility; to ſhew when to ſpeak, or to be ſilent; how to refuſe, or how to comply. We had many books to teach us our more important duties, and to ſettle opinions in philoſophy or politicks; but an *Arbiter elegantiarum*, a judge of propriety, was yet wanting, who ſhould ſurvey the track of daily converſation, and free it from thorns and prickles, which teaze the paſſer, though they do not wound him.

For this purpoſe nothing is ſo proper as the frequent publication of ſhort papers, which we read not as ſtudy but amuſement. If the ſub-

ject be ſlight, the treatiſe likewiſe is ſhort. The buſy may find time, and the idle may find patience.

This mode of conveying cheap and eaſy knowledge began among us in the Civil War*, when it was much the intereſt of either party to raiſe and fix the prejudices of the people. At that time appeared Mercurius Aulicus, Mercurius Ruſticus, and Mercurius Civicus. It is ſaid, that when any title grew popular, it was ſtolen by the antagoniſt, who by this ſtratagem conveyed his notions to thoſe who would not have received him had he not worn the appearance of a friend. The tumult of thoſe unhappy days left ſcarcely any man leiſure to treaſure up occaſional compoſitions; and ſo much were they neglected, that a complete collection is no where to be found.

Theſe Mercuries were ſucceeded by L'Eſtrange's Obſervator, and that by Leſley's

* Newſpapers appear to have had an earlier date than here aſſigned. Cleiveland, in his Character of a London Diurnal, ſays, "The original ſinner of this kind was Dutch; Gallo-Belgicus the Protoplas, and the Modern Mercuries but Hans en kelders." Some intelligence given by Mercurius Gallo-belgicus is mentioned in Carew's Survey of Cornwall, p. 126. originally publiſhed in 1602. Theſe vehicles of information are often mentioned in the plays of James and Charles the Firſt. E.

Rehearſal,

Rehearſal, and perhaps by others; but hitherto nothing had been conveyed to the people, in this commodious manner, but controverſy relating to the Church or State; of which they taught many to talk, whom they could not teach to judge.

It has been ſuggeſted, that the Royal Society was inſtituted ſoon after the Reſtoration, to divert the attention of the people from publick diſcontent. The Tatler and Spectator had the ſame tendency; they were publiſhed at a time when two parties, loud, reſtleſs, and violent, each with plauſible declarations, and each perhaps without any diſtinct termination of its views, were agitating the nation; to minds heated with political conteſt, they ſupplied cooler and more inoffenſive reflections; and it is ſaid by Addiſon, in a ſubſequent work, that they had a perceptible influence upon the converſation of that time, and taught the frolick and the gay to unite merriment with decency; an effect which they can never wholly loſe, while they continue to be among the firſt books by which both ſexes are initiated in the elegances of knowledge.

The Tatler and Spectator adjuſted, like Caſa, the unſettled practice of daily intercourſe by propriety and politeneſs; and, like La Bruyere, exhibited the *Characters and Manners of the Age*. The perſonages introduced in theſe papers were not merely ideal; they were then known, and conſpicuous in various ſtations. Of the Tatler this is told by Steele in his laſt paper, and of the Spectator by Budgell in the Preface to Theophraſtus, a book which Addiſon has recommended, and which he was ſuſpected to have reviſed, if he did not write it. Of thoſe portraits, which may be ſuppoſed to be ſometimes embelliſhed, and ſometimes aggravated, the originals are now partly known, and partly forgotten.

But to ſay that they united the plans of two or three eminent writers, is to give them but a ſmall part of their due praiſe; they ſuperadded literature and criticiſm, and ſometimes towered far above their predeceſſors; and taught, with great juſtneſs of argument and dignity of language, the moſt important duties and ſublime truths.

All theſe topicks were happily varied with elegant fictions and refined allegories, and illuminated

minated with different changes of ſtyle and felicities of invention.

It is recorded by Budgell, that of the characters feigned or exhibited in the Spectator, the favourite of Addiſon was Sir Roger de Coverley, of whom he had formed a very delicate and diſcriminated idea, which he would not ſuffer to be violated; and therefore when Steele had ſhewn him innocently picking up a girl in the Temple, and taking her to a tavern, he drew upon himſelf ſo much of his friend's indignation, that he was forced to appeaſe him by a promiſe of forbearing Sir Roger for the time to come.

The reaſon which induced Cervantes to bring his hero to the grave, *para mi ſola nacio Don Quixote, y yo para el*, made Addiſon declare, with an undue vehemence of expreſſion, that he would kill Sir Roger; being of opinion that they were born for one another, and that any other hand would do him wrong.

It may be doubted whether Addiſon ever filled up his original delineation. He deſcribes his Knight as having his imagination ſomewhat warped; but of this perverſion he has made very little uſe. The irregularities in Sir Roger's

Roger's conduct ſeem not ſo much the effects of a mind deviating from the beaten track of life, by the perpetual preſſure of ſome overwhelming idea, as of habitual ruſticity, and that negligence which ſolitary grandeur naturally generates.

The variable weather of the mind, the flying vapours of incipient madneſs, which from time to time cloud reaſon, without eclipſing it, it requires ſo much nicety to exhibit, that Addiſon ſeems to have been deterred from proſecuting his own deſign.

To Sir Roger, who, as a country gentleman, appears to be a Tory, or, as it is gently expreſſed, an adherent to the landed intereſt, is oppoſed Sir Andrew Freeport, a new man, a wealthy merchant, zealous for the moneyed intereſt, and a Whig. Of this contrariety of opinions, it is probable more conſequences were at firſt intended, than could be produced when the reſolution was taken to exclude party from the paper. Sir Andrew does but little, and that little ſeems not to have pleaſed Addiſon, who, when he diſmiſſed him from the club, changed his opinions. Steele had made him, in the true ſpirit of unfeeling commerce, declare that he "would not build an hoſpital

"for

"for idle people;" but at laſt he buys land, ſettles in the country, and builds not a manufactory, but an hoſpital for twelve old huſbandmen, for men with whom a merchant has little acquaintance, and whom he commonly conſiders with little kindneſs.

Of eſſays thus elegant, thus inſtructive, and thus commodiouſly diſtributed, it is natural to ſuppoſe the approbation general, and the ſale numerous. I once heard it obſerved, that the ſale may be calculated by the product of the tax, related in the laſt number to produce more than twenty pounds a week, and therefore ſtated at one and twenty pounds, or three pounds ten ſhillings a day: this, at a half-penny a paper, will give ſixteen hundred and eighty * for the daily number.

This ſale is not great; yet this, if Swift be credited, was likely to grow leſs; for he declares that the Spectator, whom he ridicules for his endleſs mention of the *fair ſex*, had before his receſs wearied his readers.

The next year (1713), in which Cato came upon the ſtage, was the grand climacterick

* That this calculation is not exaggerated, that it is even much below the real number, ſee the notes on the Tatler, ed. 1786, vol. VI. p. 452. N.

of

of Addiſon's reputation. Upon the death of Cato, he had, as is ſaid, planned a tragedy in the time of his travels, and had for ſeveral years the four firſt acts finiſhed, which were ſhewn to ſuch as were likely to ſpread their admiration. They were ſeen by Pope, and by Cibber, who relates that Steele, when he took back the copy, told him, in the deſpicable cant of literary modeſty, that, whatever ſpirit his friend had ſhewn in the compoſition, he doubted whether he would have courage ſufficient to expoſe it to the cenſure of a Britiſh audience.

The time however was now come, when thoſe, who affected to think liberty in danger, affected likewiſe to think that a ſtage-play might preſerve it: and Addiſon was importuned, in the name of the tutelary deities of Britain, to ſhew his courage and his zeal by finiſhing his deſign.

To reſume his work he ſeemed perverſely and unaccountably unwilling; and by a requeſt, which perhaps he wiſhed to be denied, deſired Mr. Hughes to add a fifth act. Hughes ſuppoſed him ſerious; and, undertaking the ſupplement, brought in a few days ſome ſcenes for his examination; but he had in the mean time

time gone to work himſelf, and produced half an act, which he afterwards completed, but with brevity irregularly diſproportionate to the foregoing parts: like a taſk performed with reluctance, and hurried to its concluſion.

It may yet be doubted whether Cato was made publick by any change of the author's purpoſe; for Dennis charged him with raiſing prejudices in his own favour by falſe poſitions of preparatory criticiſm, and with *poiſoning the town* by contradicting in the Spectator the eſtabliſhed rule of poetical juſtice, becauſe his own hero, with all his virtues, was to fall before a tyrant. The fact is certain; the motives we muſt gueſs.

Addiſon was, I believe, ſufficiently diſpoſed to bar all avenues againſt all danger. When Pope brought him the prologue, which is properly accommodated to the play, there were theſe words, "Britons ariſe, be worth like "this approved;" meaning nothing more than, Britons, erect and exalt yourſelves to the approbation of public virtue. Addiſon was frighted, leſt he ſhould be thought a promoter of inſurrection, and the line was liquidated to "Britons, attend."

Now,

Now, "heavily in clouds came on the day, "the great, the impotant day," when Addiſon was to ſtand the hazard of the theatre. That there might, however, be left as little hazard as was poſſible, on the firſt night Steele, as himſelf relates, undertook to pack an audience. This, ſays Pope *, had been tried for the firſt time in favour of the Diſtreſt Mother; and was now, with more efficacy, practiſed for Cato.

The danger was ſoon over. The whole nation was at that time on fire with faction. The Whigs applauded every line in which Liberty was mentioned, as a ſatire on the Tories; and the Tories echoed every clap, to ſhew that the ſatire was unfelt. The ſtory of Bolingbroke is well known. He called Booth to his box, and gave him fifty guineas for defending the cauſe of Liberty ſo well againſt a perpetual dictator. The Whigs, ſays Pope, deſign a ſecond preſent, when they can accompany it with as good a ſentence.

The play, ſupported thus by the emulation of factious praiſe, was acted night after night

* Spence.

for

for a longer time than, I believe, the public had allowed to any drama before; and the author, as Mrs. Porter long afterwards related, wandered through the whole exhibition behind the ſcenes with reſtleſs and unappeaſable ſolicitude.

When it was printed, notice was given that the Queen would be pleaſed if it was dedicated to her; "but, as he had deſigned that compli-"ment elſewhere, he found himſelf obliged," ſays Tickell, "by his duty on the one hand, "and his honour on the other, to ſend it into "the world without any dedication."

Human happineſs has always its abatements; the brighteſt ſun-ſhine of ſucceſs is not without a cloud. No ſooner was Cato offered to the reader, than it was attacked by the acute malignity of Dennis, with all the violence of angry criticiſm. Dennis, though equally zealous, and probably by his temper more furious than Addiſon, for what they called liberty, and though a flatterer of the Whig miniſtry, could not ſit quiet at a ſucceſsful play, but was eager to tell friends and enemies, that they had miſplaced their admirations. The world was too ſtubborn for inſtruction; with the fate of the

the cenſurer of Corneille's Cid, his animadverſions ſhewed his anger without effect, and Cato continued to be praiſed.

Pope had now an opportunity of courting the friendſhip of Addiſon, by vilifying his old enemy, and could give reſentment its full play without appearing to revenge himſelf. He therefore publiſhed *A Narrative of the madneſs of John Dennis*; a performance which left the objections to the play in their full force, and therefore diſcovered more deſire of vexing the critick than of defending the poet.

Addiſon, who was no ſtranger to the world, probably ſaw the ſelfiſhneſs of Pope's friendſhip; and, reſolving that he ſhould have the conſequences of his officiouſneſs to himſelf, informed Dennis by Steele, that he was ſorry for the inſult; and that, whenever he ſhould think fit to anſwer his remarks, he would do it in a manner to which nothing could be objected.

The greateſt weakneſs of the play is in the ſcenes of love, which are ſaid by Pope *. to have been added to the original plan upon a ſubſequent review, in compliance with the po-

* Spence.

pular

pular practice of the ſtage. Such an authority it is hard to reject; yet the love is ſo intimately mingled with the whole action, that it cannot eaſily be thought extrinſick and adventitious; for if it were taken away, what would be left? or how were the four acts filled in the firſt draught?

At the publication the Wits ſeemed proud to pay their attendance with encomiaſtick verſes. The beſt are from an unknown hand, which will perhaps loſe ſomewhat of their praiſe when the author is known to be Jeffreys.

Cato had yet other honours. It was cenſured as a party-play by a *Scholar of Oxford*, and defended in a favourable examination by Dr. Sewel. It was tranſlated by Salvini into Italian, and acted at Florence; and by the Jeſuits of St. Omer's into Latin, and played by their pupils. Of this verſion a copy was ſent to Mr. Addiſon: it is to be wiſhed that it could be found, for the ſake of comparing their verſion of the ſoliloquy with that of Bland.

A tragedy was written on the ſame ſubject by Des Champs, a French poet, which was tranſlated, with a criticiſm on the Engliſh

play. But the tranſlator and the critick are now forgotten.

Dennis lived on unanſwered, and therefore little read: Addiſon knew the policy of literature too well to make his enemy important by drawing the attention of the public upon a criticiſm, which, though ſometimes intemperate, was often irrefragable.

While Cato was upon the ſtage, another daily paper, called *The Guardian*, was publiſhed by Steele. To this, Addiſon gave great aſſiſtance, whether occaſionally or by previous engagement is not known.

The character of Guardian was too narrow and too ſerious: it might properly enough admit both the duties and the decencies of life, but ſeemed not to include literary ſpeculations, and was in ſome degree violated by merriment and burleſque. What had the Guardian of the Lizards to do with clubs of tall or of little men, with neſts of ants, or with Strada's proluſions?

Of this paper nothing is neceſſary to be ſaid, but that it found many contributors, and that it was a continuation of the Spectator, with the ſame elegance, and the ſame variety, till

ſome

ſome unlucky ſparkle from a Tory paper ſet Steele's politicks on fire, and wit at once blazed into faction. He was ſoon too hot for neutral topicks, and quitted the *Guardian* to write the *Engliſhman*.

The papers of Addiſon are marked in the Spectator by one of the Letters in the name of *Clio*, and in the Guardian by *a hand*; whether it was, as Tickell pretends to think, that he was unwilling to uſurp the praiſe of others, or as Steele, with far greater likelihood, inſinuates, that he could not without diſcontent impart to others any of his own. I have heard that his avidity did not ſatisfy itſelf with the air of renown, but that with great eagerneſs he laid hold on his proportion of the profits.

Many of theſe papers were written with powers truly comick, with nice diſcrimination of characters, and accurate obſervation of natural or accidental deviations from propriety; but it was not ſuppoſed that he had tried a comedy on the ſtage, till Steele, after his death, declared him the author of the *Drummer*; this however Steele did not know to be true by any direct teſtimony; for when Addiſon put the play into his hands, he only told him, it was

the work of a "Gentleman in the Company;" and when it was received, as is confeſſed, with cold diſapprobation, he was probably leſs willing to claim it. Tickell omitted it in his collection; but the teſtimony of Steele, and the total ſilence of any other claimant, has determined the public to aſſign it to Addiſon, and it is now printed with his other poetry. Steele carried the *Drummer* to the play-houſe, and afterwards to the preſs, and ſold the copy for fifty guineas.

To the opinion of Steele may be added the proof ſupplied by the play itſelf, of which the characters are ſuch as Addiſon would have delineated, and the tendency ſuch as Addiſon would have promoted. That it ſhould have been ill received would raiſe wonder, did we not daily ſee the capricious diſtribution of theatrical praiſe.

He was not all this time an indifferent ſpectator of publick affairs. He wrote, as different exigencies required (in 1707), *The preſent State of the War, and the Neceſſity of an Augmentation*; which, however judicious, being written on temporary topicks, and exhibiting no peculiar powers, laid hold on no attention,

and

and has naturally ſunk by its own weight into neglect. This cannot be ſaid of the few papers entitled *The Whig Examiner*, in which is employed all the force of gay malevolence and humorous ſatire. Of this paper, which juſt appeared and expired, Swift remarks, with exultation, that "it is now down among the "dead men*." He might well rejoice at the death of that which he could not have killed. Every reader of every party, ſince perſonal malice is paſt, and the papers which once inflamed the nation are read only as effuſions of wit, muſt wiſh for more of the *Whig Examiners*; for on no occaſion was the genius of Addiſon more vigorouſly exerted, and on none did the ſuperiority of his powers more evidently appear. His *Trial of Count Tariff*, written to expoſe the Treaty of Commerce with France, lived no longer than the queſtion that produced it.

Not long afterwards, an attempt was made to revive the *Spectator*, at a time indeed by no

* From a Tory ſong in vogue at the time, the burthen whereof is,

And he that will this health deny,
Down among the dead men let him lie. H.

means favourable to literature, when the ſucceſſion of a new family to the throne filled the nation with anxiety, diſcord, and confuſion, and either the turbulence of the times, or the ſatiety of the readers, put a ſtop to the publication, after an experiment of eighty numbers, which were afterwards collected into an eighth volume, perhaps more valuable than any one of thoſe that went before it. Addiſon produced more than a fourth part: and the other contributors are by no means unworthy of appearing as his aſſociates. The time that had paſſed during the ſuſpenſion of the *Spectator*, though it had not leſſened his power of humour, ſeems to have increaſed his diſpoſition to ſerioufneſs: the proportion of his religious to his comic papers is greater than in the former ſeries.

The *Spectator*, from its recommencement, was publiſhed only three times a week; and no diſcriminative marks were added to the papers. To Addiſon Tickell has aſcribed twenty-three *.

* Numb. 556. 557. 558. 559. 561. 562. 565. 567. 568. 569. 571. 574. 575. 579. 580. 582. 583. 584. 585. 590. 592. 598. 600.

The

The *Spectator* had many contributors; and Steele, whoſe negligence kept him always in a hurry, when it was his turn to furniſh a paper, called loudly for the Letters, of which Addiſon, whoſe materials were more, made little uſe; having recourſe to ſketches and hints, the product of his former ſtudies, which he now reviewed and completed: among theſe are named by Tickell the *Eſſays* on *Wit*, thoſe on the *Pleaſures* of the *Imagination*, and the *Criticiſm* on *Milton*.

When the Houſe of Hanover took poſſeſſion of the throne, it was reaſonable to expect that the zeal of Addiſon would be ſuitably rewarded. Before the arrival of King George, he was made ſecretary to the regency, and was required by his office to ſend notice to Hanover that the Queen was dead, and that the throne was vacant. To do this would not have been difficult to any man but Addiſon, who was ſo overwhelmed with the greatneſs of the event, and ſo diſtracted by choice of expreſſion, that the lords, who could not wait for the niceties of criticiſm, called Mr. Southwell, a clerk in the houſe, and ordered him to diſpatch the meſſage. Southwell readily told what was ne-

ceſſary in the common ſtyle of buſineſs, and valued himſelf upon having done what was too hard for Addiſon.

He was better qualified for the *Freeholder*, a paper which he publiſhed twice a week, from Dec. 23, 1715, to the middle of the next year. This was undertaken in defence of the eſtabliſhed government, ſometimes with argument, ſometimes with mirth. In argument he had many equals; but his humour was ſingular and matchleſs. Bigotry itſelf muſt be delighted with the Tory-Fox-hunter.

There are however ſome ſtrokes leſs elegant, and leſs decent; ſuch as the Pretender's Journal, in which one topick of ridicule is his poverty. This mode of abuſe had been employed by Milton againſt king Charles II.

"— — — — *Jacobæi.*
"Centum exulantis viſcera marſupii regis."

And Oldmixon delights to tell of ſome alderman of London, that he had more money than the exiled princes; but that which might be expected from Milton's ſavageneſs, or Oldmixon's meanneſs, was not ſuitable to the delicacy of Addiſon.

Steele

Steele thought the humour of the *Freeholder* too nice and gentle for ſuch noiſy times; and is reported to have ſaid that the miniſtry made uſe of a lute, when they ſhould have called for a trumpet.

This year (1716 *) he married the counteſs dowager of Warwick, whom he had ſolicited by a very long and anxious courtſhip, perhaps with behaviour not very unlike that of Sir Roger to his diſdainful widow; and who, I am afraid, diverted herſelf often by playing with his paſſion. He is ſaid to have firſt known her by becoming tutor to her ſon †. "He "formed," ſaid Tonſon, "the deſign of get-"ting that lady, from the time when he was "firſt recommended into the family." In what part of his life he obtained the recommendation, or how long, and in what manner he lived in the family, I know not. His advances at firſt were certainly timorous, but grew bolder as his reputation and influence increaſed; till at laſt the lady was perſuaded to marry him, on terms much like thoſe on which a Turkiſh princeſs is eſpouſed, to whom the Sultan is re-

* Auguſt 2. † Spence.

ported

ported to pronounce, "Daughter, I give thee "this man for thy ſlave." The marriage, if uncontradicted report can be credited, made no addition to his happineſs; it neither found them nor made them equal. She always remembered her own rank, and thought herſelf entitled to treat with very little ceremony the tutor of her ſon. Rowe's ballad of the *Deſpairing Shepherd* is ſaid to have been written, either before or after marriage, upon this memorable pair; and it is certain that Addiſon has left behind him no encouragement for ambitious love.

The year after (1717), he roſe to his higheſt elevation, being made ſecretary of ſtate. For this employment he might be juſtly ſuppoſed qualified by long practice of buſineſs, and by his regular aſcent through other offices; but expectation is often diſappointed; it is univerſally confeſſed that he was unequal to the duties of his place. In the houſe of commons he could not ſpeak, and therefore was uſeleſs to the defence of the government. In the office, ſays Pope *, he could not iſſue an order

* Spence.

without

without loſing his time in queſt of fine expreſſions. What he gained in rank, he loſt in credit; and, finding by experience his own inability, was forced to ſolicit his diſmiſſion, with a penſion of fifteen hundred pounds a year. His friends palliated this relinquiſhment, of which both friends and enemies knew the true reaſon, with an account of declining health, and the neceſſity of receſs and quiet.

He now returned to his vocation, and began to plan literary occupations for his future life. He purpoſed a tragedy on the death of Socrates; a ſtory of which, as Tickell remarks, the baſis is narrow, and to which I know not how love could have been appended. There would however have been no want either of virtue in the ſentiments, or elegance in the language.

He engaged in a nobler work, a defence of the *Chriſtian Religion*, of which part was publiſhed after his death; and he deſigned to have made a new poetical verſion of the Pſalms.

Theſe pious compoſitions Pope imputed * to a ſelfiſh motive, upon the credit, as he owns,

* Spence.

of

of Tonſon; who having quarrelled with Addiſon, and not loving him, ſaid, that, when he laid down the ſecretary's office, he intended to take orders, and obtain a biſhoprick; "for," ſaid he, "I always thought him a prieſt in his "heart."

That Pope ſhould have thought this conjecture of Tonſon worth remembrance, is a proof, but indeed ſo far as I have found, the only proof, that he retained ſome malignity from their ancient rivalry. Tonſon pretended but to gueſs it; no other mortal every ſuſpected it; and Pope might have reflected, that a man who had been ſecretary of ſtate, in the miniſtry of Sunderland, knew a nearer way to a biſhoprick than by defending Religion, or tranſlating the Pſalms.

It is related that he had once a deſign to make an Engliſh Dictionary, and that he conſidered Dr. Tillotſon as the writer of higheſt authority. There was formerly ſent to me by Mr. Locker, clerk of the Leatherſellers Company, who was eminent for curioſity and literature, a collection of examples ſelected from Tillotſon's works, as Locker ſaid, by Addiſon. It came too late to be of uſe, ſo I inſpected

inſpected it but ſlightly, and remember it indiſtinctly. I thought the paſſages too ſhort.

Addiſon however did not conclude his life in peaceful ſtudies; but relapſed, when he was near his end, to a political diſpute.

It ſo happened that (1718-19) a controverſy was agitated wirh great vehemence between thoſe friends of long continuance, Addiſon and Steele. It may be aſked, in the language of Homer, what power or what cauſe could ſet them at variance. The ſubject of their diſpute was of great importance. The earl of Sunderland propoſed an act called *The Peerage Bill*; by which the number of Peers ſhould be fixed, and the king reſtrained from any new creation of nobility, unleſs when an old family ſhould be extinct. To this the lords would naturally agree; and the king, who was yet little acquainted with his own prerogative, and, as is now well known, almoſt indifferent to the poſſeſſions of the Crown, had been perſuaded to conſent. The only difficulty was found among the commons, who were not likely to approve the perpetual excluſion of themſelves and their poſterity. The bill therefore was eagerly oppoſed,

poſed, and among others by Sir Robert Walpole, whoſe ſpeech was publiſhed.

The lords might think their dignity diminiſhed by improper advancements, and particularly by the introduction of twelve new peers at once, to produce a majority of Tories in the laſt reign; an act of authority violent enough, yet certainly legal, and by no means to be compared with that contempt of national right, with which ſome time afterwards, by the inſtigation of Whiggiſm, the commons, choſen by the people for three years, choſe themſelves for ſeven. But, whatever might be the diſpoſition of the lords, the people had no wiſh to increaſe their power. The tendency of the bill, as Steele obſerved in a letter to the earl of Oxford, was to introduce an Ariſtocracy; for a majority in the houſe of lords, ſo limited, would have been deſpotick and irreſiſtible.

To prevent this ſubverſion of the ancient eſtabliſhment, Steele, whoſe pen readily ſeconded his political paſſions, endeavoured to alarm the nation by a pamphlet called *The Plebeian*; to this an anſwer was publiſhed by Addiſon, under the title of *The Old Whig*, in which it is not diſcovered that Steele was then known

known to be the advocate for the commons. Steele replied by a ſecond *Plebeian*; and, whether by ignorance or by courteſy, confined himſelf to his queſtion, without any perſonal notice of his opponent. Nothing hitherto was committted againſt the laws of friendſhip, or proprieties of decency; but controvertiſts cannot long retain their kindneſs for each other. The *Old Whig* anſwered the *Plebeian*, and could not forbear ſome contempt of "little *Dicky*, whoſe trade it was to write pamphlets." Dicky however did not loſe his ſettled veneration for his friend; but contented himſelf with quoting ſome lines of Cato, which were at once detection and reproof. The bill was laid aſide during that ſeſſion, and Addiſon died before the next, in which its commitment was rejected by two hundred ſixty-five to one hundred ſeventy-ſeven.

Every reader ſurely muſt regret that theſe two illuſtrious friends, after ſo many years paſt in confidence and endearment, in unity of intereſt, conformity of opinion, and fellowſhip of ſtudy, ſhould finally part in acrimonious oppoſition. Such a controverſy was, "Bellum "pluſquam *civile*," as Lucan expreſſes it.

Why

Why could not faction find other advocates? But, among the uncertainties of the human ſtate, we are doomed to number the inſtability of friendſhip.

Of this diſpute I have little knowledge but from the *Biographia Britannica*. The *Old Whig* is not inſerted in Addiſon's works, nor is it mentioned by Tickell in his Life; why it was omitted, the biographers doubtleſs give the true reaſon; the fact was too recent, and thoſe who had been heated in the contention were not yet cool.

The neceſſity of complying with times, and of ſparing perſons, is the great impediment of biography. Hiſtory may be formed from permanent monuments and records; but Lives can only be written from perſonal knowledge, which is growing every day leſs, and in a ſhort time is loſt for ever, What is known can ſeldom be immediately told; and when it might be told, it is no longer known. The delicate features of the mind, the nice diſcriminattons of character, and the minute peculiarities of condnct, are ſoon obliterated; and it is ſurely better that caprice, obſtinacy, frolick, and folly, however they might delight in the

the deſcription, ſhould be ſilently forgotten, than that, by wanton merriment and unſeaſonable detection, a pang ſhould be given to a widow, a daughter, a brother, or a friend. As the proceſs of theſe narratives is now bringing me among my contemporaries, I begin to feel myſelf "walking upon aſhes under which "the fire is not extinguiſhed," and coming to the time of which it will be proper rather to ſay "nothing that is falſe, than all that is "true."

The end of this uſeful life was now approaching.—Addiſon had for ſome time been oppreſſed by ſhortneſs of breath, which was now aggravated by a dropſy; and, finding his danger preſſing, he prepared to die conformably to his own precepts and profeſſions.

During this lingering decay, he ſent, as Pope relates *, a meſſage by the earl of Warwick to Mr. Gay, deſiring to ſee him. Gay, who had not viſited him for ſome time before, obeyed the ſummons, and found himſelf received with great kindneſs. The purpoſe for which the interview had been ſolicited was

* Spence.

then diſcovered. Addiſon told him that he had injured him; but that, if he recovered, he would recompenſe him. What the injury was he did not explain; nor did Gay ever know; but ſuppoſed that ſome preferment deſigned for him had, by Addiſon's intervention, been with-held.

Lord Warwick was a young man of very irregular life, and perhaps of looſe opinions. Addiſon, for whom he did not want reſpect, had very diligently endeavoured to reclaim him; but his arguments and expoſtulations had no effect. One experiment, however, remained to be tried: when he found his life near its end, he directed the young lord to be called; and when he deſired, with great tenderneſs, to hear his laſt injunctions, told him, "I have ſent "for you that you may ſee how a Chriſtian can "die." What effect this awful ſcene had on the earl, I know not; he likewiſe died himſelf in a ſhort time.

In Tickell's excellent Elegy on his friend are theſe lines:

> He taught us how to live; and, oh! too high
> The price of knowledge, taught us how to die.

In

In which he alludes, as he told Dr. Young, to this moving interview.

Having given directions to Mr. Tickell for the publication of his works, and dedicated them on his death-bed to his friend Mr. Craggs, he died June 17, 1719, at Holland-houſe, leaving no child but a daughter.

Of his virtue it is a ſufficient teſtimony, that the reſentment of party has tranſmitted no charge of any crime. He was not one of thoſe who are praiſed only after death; for his merit was ſo generally acknowledged, that Swift, having obſerved that his election paſſed without a conteſt, adds, that, if he propoſed himſelf for king, he would hardly have been refuſed.

His zeal for his party did not extinguiſh his kindneſs for the merit of his opponents: when he was ſecretary in Ireland, he refuſed to intermit his acquaintance with Swift.

Of his habits, or external manners, nothing is ſo often mentioned as that timorous or ſullen taciturnity, which his friends called modeſty by too mild a name. Steele mentions with great tenderneſs "that remarkable baſhfulneſs, "which is a cloak that hides and muffles

" merit;" and tells us, that " his abilities " were covered only by modeſty, which doubles " the beauties which are ſeen, and gives credit " and eſteem to all that are concealed." Cheſterfield affirms, that " Addiſon was the moſt " timorous and aukward man that he ever ſaw." And Addiſon, ſpeaking of his own deficience in converſation, uſed to ſay of himſelf, that, with reſpect to intellectual wealth, " he could " draw bills for a thouſand pounds, though he " had not a guinea in his pocket."

That he wanted current coin for ready payment, and by that want was often obſtructed and diſtreſſed; that he was often oppreſſed by an improper and ungraceful timidity; every teſtimony concurs to prove: but Cheſterfield's repreſentation is doubtleſs hyperbolical. That man cannot be ſuppoſed very unexpert in the arts of converſation and practice of life, who without fortune or alliance, by his uſefulneſs and dexterity, became ſecretary of ſtate; and who died at forty-ſeven, after having not only ſtood long in the higheſt rank of wit and literature, but filled one of the moſt important offices of ſtate.

The

The time in which he lived had reaſon to lament his obſtinacy of ſilence: "for he was," ſays Steele, "above all men in that talent called "humour, and enjoyed it in ſuch perfection, "that I have often reflected, after a night "ſpent with him apart from all the world, "that I had had the pleaſure of converſing with "an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Ca-"tullus, who had all their wit and nature, "heightened with humour more exquiſite and "delightful than any other man ever poſſeſſed." This is the fondneſs of a friend; let us hear what is told us by a rival. "Addiſon's con-"verſation *," ſays Pope, "had ſomething "in it more charming than I have found in "any other man. But this was only when "familiar: before ſtrangers, or perhaps a ſingle "ſtranger, he preſerved his dignity by a ſtiff "ſilence."

This modeſty was by no means inconſiſtent with a very high opinion of his own merit. He demanded to be the firſt name in modern wit; and, with Steele to echo him, uſed to depreciate Dryden, whom Pope and Congreve defended againſt them †. There is no reaſon

* Spence. † Tonſon and Spence.

to doubt that he ſuffered too much pain from the prevalence of Pope's poetical reputation; nor is it without ſtrong reaſon ſuſpected, that by ſome diſingenuous acts he endeavoured to obſtruct it; Pope was not the only man whom he inſiduouſly injured, though the only man of whom he could be afraid.

His own powers were ſuch as might have ſatisfied him with conſcious excellence. Of very extenſive learning he has indeed given no proofs. He ſeems to have had ſmall acquaintance with the ſciences, and to have read little except Latin and French; but of the Latin poets his *Dialogues on Medals* ſhew that he had peruſed the works with great diligence and ſkill. The abundance of his own mind left him little indeed of adventitious ſentiments; his wit always could ſuggeſt what the occaſion demanded. He had read with critical eyes the important volume of human life, and knew the heart of man from the depths of ſtratagem to the ſurface of affectation.

What he knew he could eaſily communicate. "This," ſays Steele, "was particular in this "writer, that, when he had taken his reſolu-"tion, or made his plan for what he deſigned

"to

"to write, he would walk about a room, and "dictate it into language with as much freedom "and eaſe as any one could write it down, and "attend to the coherence and grammar of what "he dictated."

Pope *, who can be leſs ſuſpected of favouring his memory, declares that he wrote very fluently, but was ſlow and ſcrupulous in correcting; that many of his Spectators were written very faſt, and ſent immediately to the preſs; and that it ſeemed to be for his advantage not to have time for much reviſal.

"He would alter," ſays Pope, "any thing "to pleaſe his friends, before publication; "but would not retouch his pieces afterwards: "and I believe not one word in Cato, to "which I made an objection, was ſuffered to "ſtand."

The laſt line of Cato is Pope's, having been originally written

And, oh! 'twas this that ended Cato's life.

Pope might have made more objections to the ſix concluding lines. In the firſt couplet the

* Spence.

words "from hence" are improper; and the ſecond line is taken from Dryden's Virgil. Of the next couplet, the firſt verſe, being included in the ſecond, is therefore uſeleſs; and in the third *Diſcord* is made to produce *Strife*.

Of the courſe of Addiſon's familiar day*, before his marriage, Pope has given a detail. He had in the houſe with him Budgell, and perhaps Philips. His chief companions were Steele, Budgell, Philips, Carey, Davenant, and colonel Brett. With one or other of theſe he always breakfaſted. He ſtudied all morning; then dined at a tavern; and went afterwards to Button's.

Button had been a ſervant in the counteſs of Warwick's family, who, under the patronage of Addiſon, kept a coffee-houſe on the ſouth ſide of Ruſſel-ſtreet, about two doors from Covent-garden. Here it was that the wits of that time uſed to aſſemble. It is ſaid, when Addiſon had ſuffered any vexation from the counteſs, he withdrew the company from Button's houſe.

* Spence.

From

From the coffee-houſe he went again to a tavern, where he often ſat late, and drank too much wine. In the bottle, diſcontent ſeeks for comfort, cowardice for courage, and baſhfulneſs for confidence. It is not unlikely that Addiſon was firſt ſeduced to exceſs by the manumiſſion which he obtained from the ſervile timidity of his ſober hours. He that feels oppreſſion from the preſence of thoſe to whom he knows himſelf ſuperior, will deſire to ſet looſe his powers of converſation; and who, that ever aſked ſuccours from Bacchus, was able to preſerve himſelf from being enſlaved by his auxiliary?

Among thoſe friends it was that Addiſon diſplayed the elegance of his colloquial accompliſhments, which may eaſily be ſuppoſed ſuch as Pope repreſents them. The remark of Mandeville, who, when he had paſſed an evening in his company, declared that he was a parſon in a tye-wig, can detract little from his character; he was always reſerved to ſtrangers, and was not incited to uncommon freedom by a character like that of Mandeville.

From any minute knowledge of his familiar manners, the intervention of ſixty years has now

now debarred us. Steele once promiſed Congreve and the publick a complete deſcription of his character; but the promiſes of authors are like the vows of lovers. Steele thought no more on his deſign, or thought on it with anxiety that at laſt diſguſted him, and left his friend in the hands of Tickell.

One ſlight lineament of his character Swift has preſerved. It was his practice, when he found any man invincibly wrong, to flatter his opinions by acquieſcence, and ſink him yet deeper in abſurdity. This artifice of miſchief was admired by Stella; and Swift ſeems to approve her admiration.

His works will ſupply ſome information. It appears from his various pictures of the world, that, with all his baſhfulneſs, he had converſed with many diſtinct claſſes of men, had ſurveyed their ways with very diligent obſervation, and marked with great acuteneſs the effects of different modes of life. He was a man in whoſe preſence nothing reprehenſible was out of danger; quick in diſcerning whatever was wrong or ridiculous, and not unwilling to expoſe it. "There are," ſays Steele, "in his writings, many oblique ſtrokes upon

"ſome

"ſome of the wittieſt men of the age." His delight was more to excite merriment than deteſtation; and he detects follies rather than crimes.

If any judgement be made, from his books, of his moral character, nothing will be found but purity and excellence. Knowledge of mankind indeed, leſs extenſive than that of Addiſon, will ſhew, that to write, and to live, are very different. Many who praiſe virtue, do no more than praiſe it. Yet it is reaſonable to believe that Addiſon's profeſſions and practice were at no great variance, ſince, amidſt that ſtorm of faction in which moſt of his life was paſſed, though his ſtation made him conſpicuous, and his activity made him formidable, the character given him by his friends was never contradicted by his enemies: of thoſe with whom intereſt or opinion united him, he had not only the eſteem, but the kindneſs; and of others, whom the violence of oppoſition drove againſt him, though he might loſe the love, he retained the reverence.

It is juſtly obſerved by Tickell, that he employed wit on the ſide of virtue and religion. He not only made the proper uſe of wit himſelf,

ſelf, but taught it to others; and from his time it has been generally ſubſervient to the cauſe of reaſon and of truth. He has diſſipated the prejudice that had long connected gaiety with vice, and eaſineſs of manners with laxity of principles. He has reſtored virtue to its dignity, and taught innocence not to be aſhamed. This is an elevation of literary character, "above all "Greek, above all Roman fame." No greater felicity can genius attain than that of having purified intellectual pleaſure, ſeparated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiouſneſs; of having taught a ſucceſſion of writers to bring elegance and gaiety to the aid of goodneſs; and, if I may uſe expreſſions yet more awful, of having "turned many to righteouſ-"neſs."

ADDISON, in his life, and for ſome time afterwards, was conſidered by the greater part of readers as ſupremely excelling both in poetry and criticiſm. Part of his reputation may be probably aſcribed to the advancement of his fortune; when, as Swift obſerves, he became a ſtateſman, and ſaw poets waiting at his levee, it was no wonder that praiſe was accumulated

cumulated upon him. Much likewiſe may be more honourably aſcribed to his perſonal character: he who, if he had claimed it, might have obtained the diadem, was not likely to be denied the laurel.

But time quickly puts an end to artificial and accidental fame; and Addiſon is to paſs through futurity protected only by his genius. Every name which kindneſs or intereſt once raiſed too high is in danger, leſt the next age ſhould, by the vengeance of criticiſm, ſink it in the ſame proportion. A great writer has lately ſtyled him "an indifferent poet, and a worſe cri-"tick."

His poetry is firſt to be conſidered; of which it muſt be confeſſed that it has not often thoſe felicities of diction which give luſtre to ſentiments, or that vigour of ſentiment that animates diction: there is little of ardour, vehemence, or tranſport; there is very rarely the awfulneſs of grandeur, and not very often the ſplendour of elegance. He thinks juſtly; but he thinks faintly. This is his general character; to which, doubtleſs, many ſingle paſſages will furniſh exceptions.

Yet,

Yet, if he ſeldom reaches ſupreme excellence, he rarely ſinks into dullneſs, and is ſtill more rarely entangled in abſurdity. He did not truſt his powers enough to be negligent. There is in moſt of his compoſitions a calmneſs and equability, deliberate and cautious, ſometimes with little that delights, but ſeldom with any thing that offends.

Of this kind ſeem to be his poems to Dryden, to Sommers, and to the King. His ode on St. Cecilia has been imitated by Pope, and has ſomething in it of Dryden's vigour. Of his Account of the Engliſh Poets, he uſed to ſpeak as a "poor thing *;" but it is not worſe than his uſual ſtrain. He has ſaid, not very judiciouſly, in his character of Waller,

Thy verſe could ſhew ev'n Cromwell's innocence,
And compliment the ſtorms that bore him hence.
O! had thy Muſe not come an age too ſoon,
But ſeen great Naſſau on the Britiſh throne,
How had his triumph glitter'd in thy page!—

What is this but to ſay, that he who could compliment Cromwell had been the proper

* Spence

poet

poet for king William? Addiſon, however, never printed the piece.

The Letter from Italy has been always praiſed, but has never been praiſed beyond its merit. It is more correct, with leſs appearance of labour, and more elegant, with leſs ambition of ornament, than any other of his poems. There is, however, one broken metaphor, of which notice may properly be taken:

Fir'd with that name—
I bridle in my ſtruggling Muſe with pain,
That longs to launch into a nobler ſtrain.

To *bridle* a *goddeſs* is no very delicate idea; but why muſt ſhe be *bridled?* becauſe ſhe *longs to launch*; an act which was never hindered by a *bridle:* and whither will ſhe *launch?* into a *nobler ſtrain.* She is in the firſt line a *horſe,* in the ſecond a *boat*; and the care of the poet is to keep his *horſe* or his *boat* from *ſinging.*

The next compoſition is the far-famed Campaign, which Dr. Warton has termed a "Gazette in Rhyme," with harſhneſs not often uſed by the good-nature of his criticiſm. Before a cenſure ſo ſevere is admitted, let us conſider

ſider that War is a frequent ſubject of Poetry; and then enquire who has deſcribed it with more juſtneſs and force. Many of our own writers tried their powers upon this year of victory: yet Addiſon's is confeſſedly the beſt performance; his poem is the work of a man not blinded by the duſt of learning; his images are not borrowed merely from books. The ſuperiority which he confers upon his hero is not perſonal proweſs, and "mighty bone," but deliberate intrepidity, a calm command of his paſſions, and the power of conſulting his own mind in the midſt of danger. The rejection and contempt of fiction is rational and manly.

It may be obſerved that the laſt line is imitated by Pope:

Marlb'rough's exploits appear divinely bright—
Rais'd of themſelves their genuine charms they boaſt,
And thoſe, that paint them trueſt, praiſe them moſt.

This Pope had in his thoughts; but, not knowing how to uſe what was not his own, he ſpoiled the thought when he had borrowed it:

The

The well-ſung woes ſhall ſoothe my ghoſt;
He beſt can paint them who ſhall feel them moſt.

Martial exploits may be *painted*; perhaps *woes* may be *painted*: but they are ſurely not *painted* by being *well-ſung*: it is not eaſy to paint in ſong, or to ſing in colours.

No paſſage in the Campaign has been more often mentioned than the ſimile of the Angel, which is ſaid in the Tatler to be "one of the "nobleſt thoughts that ever entered into the "heart of man," and is therefore worthy of attentive conſideration. Let it be firſt enquired whether it be a ſimile. A poetical ſimile is the diſcovery of likeneſs between two actions, in their general nature diſſimilar, or of cauſes terminating by different operations in ſome reſemblance of effect. But the mention of another like conſequence from a like cauſe, or of a like performance by a like agency, is not a ſimile, but an exemplification. It is not a ſimile to ſay that the Thames waters fields, as the Po waters fields; or that as Hecla vomits flames in Iceland, ſo Ætna vomits flames in Sicily. When Horace ſays of Pindar, that he pours his violence and rapidity of verſe, as

a river ſwoln with rain ruſhes from the mountain; or of himſelf, that his genius wanders in queſt of poetical decorations, as the bee wanders to collect honey; he, in either caſe, produces a ſimile; the mind is impreſſed with the reſemblance of things generally unlike, as unlike as intellect and body. But if Pindar had been deſcribed as writing with the copiouſneſs and grandeur of Homer, or Horace had told that he reviewed and finiſhed his own poetry with the ſame care as Iſocrates poliſhed his orations, inſtead of ſimilitude, he would have exhibited almoſt identity; he would have given the ſame portraits with different names. In the poem now examined, when the Engliſh are repreſented as gaining a fortified paſs, by repetition of attack and perſeverance of reſolution; their obſtinacy of courage and vigour of onſet is well illuſtrated by the ſea that breaks, with inceſſant battery, the dikes of Holland. This is a ſimile: but when Addiſon, having celebrated the beauty of Marlborough's perſon, tells us, that "Achilles thus was formed with "every grace," here is no ſimile, but a mere exemplification. A ſimile may be compared to lines converging at a point, and is more excellent

cellent as the lines approach from greater diſtance: an exemplification may be conſidered as two parallel lines, which run on together without approximation, never far ſeparated, and never joined.

Marlborough is ſo like the angel in the poem, that the action of both is almoſt the ſame, and performed by both in the ſame manner. Marlborough "teaches the battle to rage;" the angel "directs the ſtorm:" Marlborough is "unmoved in peaceful thought;" the angel is "calm and ſerene;" Marlborough ſtands "unmoved amidſt the ſhock of hoſts;" the angel rides "calm in the whirlwind." The lines on Marlborough are juſt and noble; but the ſimile gives almoſt the ſame images a ſecond time.

But perhaps this thought, though hardly a ſimile, was remote from vulgar conceptions, and required great labour of reſearch, or dexterity of application. Of this, Dr. Madden, a name which Ireland ought to honour, once gave me his opinion. "If I had ſet," ſaid he "ten ſchool-boys to write on the battle of "Blenheim, and eight had brought me the "Angel, I ſhould not have been ſurpriſed."

The opera of Roſamond, though it is ſeldom mentioned, is one of the firſt of Addiſon's compoſitions. The ſubject is well choſen, the fiction is pleaſing, and the praiſe of Marlborough, for which the ſcene gives an opportunity, is, what perhaps every human excellence muſt be, the product of good-luck improved by genius. The thoughts are ſometimes great, and ſometimes tender; the verſification is eaſy and gay. There is doubtleſs ſome advantage in the ſhortneſs of the lines, which there is little temptation to load with expletive epithets. The dialogue ſeems commonly better than the ſongs. The two comic characters of Sir Truſty and Grideline, though of no great value, are yet ſuch as the poet intended. Sir Truſty's account of the death of Roſamond is, I think, too groſsly abſurd. The whole drama is airy and elegant; engaging in its proceſs, and pleaſing in its concluſion. If Addiſon had cultivated the lighter parts of poetry, he would probably have excelled.

The tragedy of Cato, which, contrary to the rule obſerved in ſelecting the works of other poets, has by the weight of its character forced its way into the late collection, is unqueſtionably

queſtionably the nobleſt production of Addiſon's genius. Of a work ſo much read, it is difficult to ſay any thing new. About things on which the publick thinks long, it commonly attains to think right; and of Cato it has been not unjuſtly determined, that it is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama, rather a ſucceſſion of juſt ſentiments in elegant language, than a repreſentation of natural affections, or of any ſtate probable or poſſible in human life. Nothing here "excites or aſſuages emotion:" here is "no magical power of raiſing phan-"taſtick terror or wild anxiety." The events are expected without ſolicitude, and are remembered without joy or ſorrow. Of the agents we have no care: we conſider not what they are doing, or what they are ſuffering; we wiſh only to know what they have to ſay. Cato is a being above our ſolicitude; a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedleſs confidence. To the reſt, neither gods nor men can have much attention; for there is not one amongſt them that ſtrongly attracts either affection or eſteem. But they are made the vehicles of ſuch ſentiments and ſuch expreſſion, that there is ſcarcely

a ſcene in the play which the reader does not wiſh to impreſs upon his memory.

When Cato was ſhewn to Pope *, he adviſed the author to print it, without any theatrical exhibition; ſuppoſing that it would be read more favourably than heard. Addiſon declared himſelf of the ſame opinion; but urged the importunity of his friends for its appearance on the ſtage. The emulation of parties made it ſucceſsful beyond expectation, and its ſucceſs has introduced or confirmed among us the uſe of dialogue too declamatory, of unaffecting elegance, and chill philoſophy.

The univerſality of applauſe, however it might quell the cenſure of common mortals, had no other effect than to harden Dennis in fixed diſlike; but his diſlike was not merely capricious. He found and ſhewed many faults; he ſhewed them indeed with anger, but he found them with acuteneſs, ſuch as ought to reſcue his criticiſm from oblivion; though, at laſt, it will have no other life than it derives from the work which it endeavours to oppreſs.

* Spence.

Why

Why he pays no regard to the opinion of the audience, he gives his reaſon, by remarking, that

"A deference is to be paid to a general ap-
"plauſe, when it appears that that applauſe is
"natural and ſpontaneous; but that little regard
"is to be had to it, when it is affected and
"artificial. Of all the tragedies which in his
"memory have had vaſt and violent runs, not
"one has been excellent, few have been to-
"lerable, moſt have been ſcandalous. When
"a poet writes a tragedy, who knows he has
"judgement, and who feels he has genius,
"that poet preſumes upon his own merit, and
"ſcorns to make a cabal. That people come
"coolly to the repreſentation of ſuch a tragedy,
"without any violent expectation, or deluſive
"imagination, or invincible prepoſſeſſion; that
"ſuch an audience is liable to receive the im-
"preſſions which the poem ſhall naturally
"make on them, and to judge by their own
"reaſon, and their own judgements, and that
"reaſon and judgement are calm and ſerene,
"not formed by nature to make proſelytes,
"and to controul and lord it over the imagina-
"tions of others. But that when an author

" writes a tragedy, who knows he has neither " genius nor judgement, he has recourſe to the " making a party, and he endeavours to make " up in induſtry what is wanting in talent, " and to ſupply by poetical craft the abſence of " poetical art: that ſuch an author is humbly " contented to raiſe men's paſſions by a plot " without doors, ſince he deſpairs of doing it " by that which he brings upon the ſtage. " That party and paſſion, and prepoſſeſſion, " are clamorous and tumultuous things, and ſo " much the more clamorous and tumultuous " by how much the more erroneous: that they " domineer and tyrannize over the imagina- " tions of perſons who want judgement, and " ſometimes too of thoſe who have it; and, " like a fierce and outrageous torrent, bear " down all oppoſition before them."

He then condemns the neglect of poetical juſtice; which is always one of his favourite principles.

" 'Tis certainly the duty of every tragick " poet, by the exact diſtribution of poetical " juſtice, to imitate the Divine Diſpenſation, " and to inculcate a particular Providence. " 'Tis true, indeed, upon the ſtage of the " world,

"world, the wicked ſometimes proſper, and "the guiltleſs ſuffer. But that is permitted by "the Governor of the world, to ſhew, from "the attribute of his infinite juſtice, that there "is a compenſation in futurity, to prove the "immortality of the human ſoul, and the cer-"tainty of future rewards and puniſhments. "But the poetical perſons in tragedy exiſt no "longer than the reading, or the repreſenta-"tion; the whole extent of their entity is "circumſcribed by thoſe; and therefore, dur-"ing that reading or repreſentation, according "to their merits or demerits, they muſt be "puniſhed or rewarded. If this is not done, "there is no impartial diſtribution of poetical "juſtice, no inſtructive lecture of a particular "Providence, and no imitation of the Divine "Diſpenſation. And yet the author of this "tragedy does not only run counter to this, "in the fate of his principal character; but "every where, throughout it, makes virtue "ſuffer, and vice triumph: for not only Cato "is vanquiſhed by Cæſar, but the treachery and "perfidiouſneſs of Syphax prevail over the honeſt "ſimplicity and the credulity of Juba; and the "ſly ſubtlety and diſſimulation of Portius over

"the

" the generous frankneſs and open-heartedneſs " of Marcus."

Whatever pleaſure there may be in ſeeing crimes puniſhed and virtue rewarded, yet, ſince wickedneſs often proſpers in real life, the poet is certainly at liberty to give it proſperity on the ſtage. For if poetry has an imitation of reality, how are its laws broken by exhibiting the world in its true form? The Stage may ſometimes gratify our wiſhes; but, if it be truly the " *mirror of life*," it ought to ſhew us ſometimes what we are to expect.

Dennis objects to the characters, that they are not natural, or reaſonable; but as heroes and heroines are not beings that are ſeen every day, it is hard to find upon what principles their conduct ſhall be tried. It is, however, not uſeleſs to conſider what he ſays of the manner in which Cato receives the account of his ſon's death.

" Nor is the grief of Cato, in the fourth act, " one jot more in nature than that of his ſon " and Lucia in the third. Cato receives the " news of his ſon's death not only with dry " eyes, but with a ſort of ſatisfaction; and " in the ſame page ſheds tears for the calamity " of

"of his country, and does the ſame thing in "the next page upon the bare apprehenſion of "the danger of his friends. Now, ſince the "love of one's country is the love of one's "countrymen, as I have ſhewn upon another "occaſion, I deſire to aſk theſe queſtions: Of "all our countrymen, which do we love moſt, "thoſe whom we know, or thoſe whom we "know not? And of thoſe whom we know, "which do we cheriſh moſt, our friends or our "enemies? And of our friends, which are the "deareſt to us, thoſe who are related to us, "or thoſe who are not? And of all our rela- "tions, for which have we moſt tenderneſs, "for thoſe who are near to us, or for thoſe "who are remote? And of our near relations, "which are the neareſt, and conſequently the "deareſt to us, our offspring or others? Our "offspring, moſt certainly; as nature, or in "other words Providence, has wiſely contrived "for the preſervation of mankind. Now, does "it not follow, from what has been ſaid, that "for a man to receive the news of his ſon's "death with dry eyes, and to weep at the ſame "time for the calamities of his country, is a "wretched affectation, and a miſerable incon- "ſiſtency?

" ſiſtency? Is not that, in plain Engliſh, to " receive with dry eyes the news of the deaths " of thoſe for whoſe ſake our country is a name " ſo dear to us, and at the ſame time to ſhed " tears for thoſe for whoſe ſakes our country is " not a name ſo dear to us?"

But this formidable aſſailant is leſs reſiſtible when he attacks the probability of the action, and the reaſonableneſs of the plan. Every critical reader muſt remark, that Addiſon has, with a ſcrupuloſity almoſt unexampled on the Engliſh ſtage, confined himſelf in time to a ſingle day, and in place to rigorous unity. The ſcene never changes, and the whole action of the play paſſes in the great hall of Cato's houſe at Utica. Much therefore is done in the hall, for which any other place had been more fit; and this impropriety affords Dennis many hints of merriment, and opportunities of triumph. The paſſage is long; but as ſuch diſquiſitions are not common, and the objections are ſkilfully formed and vigorouſly urged, thoſe who delight in critical controverſy will not think it tedious.

" Upon the departure of Portius, Sempro- " nius makes but one ſoliloquy, and imme- " diately

"diately in comes Syphax, and then the two "politicians are at it immediately. They lay "their heads together, with their ſnuff-boxes "in their hands, as Mr. Bayes has it, and "feague it away. But, in the midſt of that "wiſe ſcene, Syphax ſeems to give a ſeaſonable "caution to Sempronius:

"*Syph.* But is it true, Sempronius, that your ſe-
"nate
"Is call'd together? Gods! thou muſt be cautious;
"Cato has piercing eyes.

"There is a great deal of caution ſhewn indeed, "in meeting in a governor's own hall to carry "on their plot againſt him. Whatever opi-"nion they have of his eyes, I ſuppoſe "they had none of his ears, or they would "never have talked at this fooliſh rate ſo "near:

"Gods! thou muſt be cautious.

"Oh! yes, very cautious: for if Cato ſhould "overhear you, and turn you off for politi-"cians, Cæſar would never take you; no, "Cæſar would never take you.

"When

" When Cato, Act II. turns the ſenators " out of the hall, upon pretence of acquainting " Juba with the reſult of their debates, he ap- " pears to me to do a thing which is neither " reaſonable nor civil. Juba might certainly " have better been made acquainted with the " reſult of that debate in ſome private apartment " of the palace. But the poet was driven upon " this abſurdity to make way for another; and " that is, to give Juba an opportunity to de- " mand Marcia of her father. But the quarrel " and rage of Juba and Syphax, in the ſame " Act, the invectives of Syphax againſt the " Romans and Cato; the advice that he gives " Juba, in her father's hall, to bear away " Marcia by force; and his brutal and clamor- " ous rage upon his refuſal, and at a time when " Cato was ſcarce out of ſight, and perhaps " not out of hearing, at leaſt, ſome of his " guards or domeſticks muſt neceſſarily be ſup- " poſed to be within hearing; is a thing that is " ſo far from being probable, that it is hardly " poſſible.

" Sempronius, in the ſecond Act, comes " back once more in the ſame morning to the " governor's

"governor's hall, to carry on the conſpiracy "with Syphax againſt the governor, his coun- "try, and his family; which is ſo ſtupid, that "it is below the wiſdom of the O—'s, the "Mac's, and the Teague's; even Euſtace "Commins himſelf would never have gone to "Juſtice-hall, to have conſpired againſt the "government. If officers at Portſmouth ſhould "lay their heads together, in order to the "carrying off* J— G—'s niece or daughter, "would they meet in J— G—'s hall, to carry "on that conſpiracy? There would be no "neceſſity for their meeting there, at leaſt till "they came to the execution of their plot, be- "cauſe there would be other places to meet in. "There would be no probability that they "ſhould meet there, becauſe there would be "places more private and more commodious. "Now there ought to be nothing in a tra- "gical action but what is neceſſary or pro- "bable.

* The perſon meant by the initials J. G. is Sir John Gibſon, Lieutenaut Governor of Portſmouth in the year 1710, and afterwards. He was much beloved in the army, and by the common ſoldiers called *Johnny Gibſon*, H.

"But

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"But

" But treaſon is not the only thing that is " carried on in this hall: that, and love, and " philoſophy, take their turns in it, without " any manner of neceſſity or probability occa- " ſioned by the action, as duly and as regularly, " without interrupting one another, as if there " were a triple league between them, and a " mutual agreement that each ſhould give place " to and make way for the other, in a due and " orderly ſucceſſion.

" We now come to the third Act. Sempro- " nius, in this Act, comes into the governor's " hall, with the leaders of the mutiny: but as " ſoon as Cato is gone, Sempronius, who " but juſt before had acted like an unparal- " lel'd knave, diſcovers himſelf, like an egre- " gious fool, to be an accomplice in the con- " ſpiracy.

" *Semp.* Know, villains, when ſuch paltry ſlaves preſume
" To mix in treaſon, if the plot ſucceeds,
" They're thrown neglected by; but, if it fails,
" They're ſure to die like dogs, as you ſhall do.
" Here, take theſe factious monſters, drag them " forth
" To ſudden death—

" 'Tis

"'Tis true, indeed, the ſecond leader ſays, "there are none there but friends; but is that "poſſible at ſuch a juncture? Can a parcel of "rogues attempt to aſſaſſinate the governor of a "town of war, in his own houſe, in mid-day, "and, after they are diſcovered and defeated, "can there be none near them but friends? "Is it not plain from theſe words of Sempro-"nius,

"Here, take theſe factious monſters, drag them
"forth
"To ſudden death—

"and, from the entrance of the guards upon the "word of command, that thoſe guards were "within ear-ſhot? Behold Sempronius then "palpably diſcovered. How comes it to paſs, "then, that, inſtead of being hanged up with "the reſt, he remains ſecure in the governor's "hall, and there carries on his conſpiracy "againſt the government, the third time in the "ſame day, with his old comrade Syphax, "who enters at the ſame time that the guards "are carrying away the leaders, big with the "news of the defeat of Sempronius; though "where he had his intelligence ſo ſoon is diffi-

" cult to imagine? And now the reader may
" expect a very extraordinary ſcene: there is
" not abundance of ſpirit indeed, nor a great
" deal of paſſion, but there is wiſdom more
" than enough to ſupply all defects.

" *Syph.* Our firſt deſign, my friend, has prov'd
" abortive;
" Still there remains an after-game to play:
" My troops are mounted, their Numidian ſteeds
" Snuff up the winds, and long to ſcour the deſart;
" Let but Sempronius lead us in our flight,
" We'll force the gate, where Marcus keeps his
" guard,
" And hew down all that would oppoſe our paſſage;
" A day will bring us into Cæſar's camp.
" *Semp.* Confuſion! I have fail'd of half my
" purpoſe;
" Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind.

" Well! but though he tells us the half pur-
" poſe he has failed of, he does not tell us the
" half that he has carried. But what does he
" mean by
" Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind?

" He is now in her own houſe; and we have
" neither ſeen her nor heard of her any where
" elſe

"elſe ſince the play began. But now let us "hear Syphax:

"What hinders then, but that you find her out,
"And hurry her away by manly force?

"But what does old Syphax mean by finding "her out? They talk as if ſhe were as hard "to be found as a hare in a froſty morning.

"*Semp.* But how to gain admiſſion!

"Oh! ſhe is found out then, it ſeems.

"But how to gain admiſſion! for acceſs
"Is giv'n to none, but Juba and her brothers.

"But, raillery apart, why acceſs to Juba? For "he was owned and received as a lover neither "by the father nor by the daughter. Well! "but let that paſs. Syphax puts Sempronius "out of pain immediately; and, being a Nu- "midian, abounding in wiles, ſupplies him "with a ſtratagem for admiſſion, that, I be- "lieve, is a non-pareille:

"*Syph.* Thou ſhalt have Juba's dreſs, and Juba's "guards;
"The doors will open, when Numidia's prince
"Seems to appear before them.

" Sempronius is, it ſeems, to paſs for Juba " in full day at Cato's houſe, where they were " both ſo very well known, by having Juba's " dreſs and his guards; as if one of the mar- " ſhals of France could paſs for the duke of " Bavaria, at noon-day at Verſailles, by hav- " ing his dreſs and liveries. But how does " Syphax pretend to help Sempronius to young " Juba's dreſs? Does he ſerve him in a double " capacity, as general and maſter of his ward- " robe? But why Juba's guards? For the devil " of any guards has Juba appeared with yet. " Well! though this is a mighty politick in- " vention, yet, methinks, they might have " done without it: for, ſince the advice that " Syphax gave to Sempronius was,

" To hurry her away by manly force,

" in my opinion, the ſhorteſt and likelieſt way " of coming at the lady was by demoliſhing, " inſtead of putting on an impertinent diſguiſe " to circumvent two or three ſlaves. But Sem- " pronius, it ſeems, is of another opinion. " He extols to the ſkies the invention of old " Syphax:

" *Sempr.* Heavens! what a thought was there!

" Now

"Now I appeal to the reader, if I have not "been as good as my word. Did I not tell "him, that I would lay before him a very "wiſe ſcene?

"But now let us lay before the reader that "part of the ſcenery of the Fourth Act, which "may ſhew the abſurdities which the author "has run into, through the indiſcreet obſerv- "ance of the Unity of Place. I do not re- "member that Ariſtotle has ſaid any thing ex- "preſsly concerning the Unity of Place. 'Tis "true, implicitly he has ſaid enough in the "rules which he has laid down for the Chorus. "For, by making the Chorus an eſſential part "of Tragedy, and by bringing it on the ſtage "immediately after the opening of the ſcene, "and retaining it there till the very cataſtro- "phe, he has ſo determined and fixed the place "of action, that it was impoſſible for an au- "thor on the Grecian ſtage to break through "that unity. I am of opinion, that if a mo- "dern tragick poet can preſerve the unity of "place, without deſtroying the probability of "the incidents, 'tis always beſt for him to do "it; becauſe, by the preſervation of that unity, "as we have taken notice above, he adds grace,

" and cleanneſs, and comelineſs, to the repre-
" ſentation. But ſince there are no expreſs
" rules about it, and we are under no compul-
" ſion to keep it, ſince we have no Chorus as
" the Grecian poet had; if it cannot be pre-
" ſerved, without rendering the greater part of
" the incidents unreaſonable and abſurd, and
" perhaps ſometimes monſtrous, 'tis certainly
" better to break it.

" Now comes bully Sempronius, comically
" accoutred and equipped with his Numidian
" dreſs and his Numidian guards. Let the
" reader attend to him with all his ears; for the
" words of the wiſe are precious:

" *Sempr.* The deer is lodg'd, I've track'd her to
" her covert.

" Now I would fain know why this deer is
" ſaid to be lodged, ſince we have not heard
" one word, ſince the play began, of her being
" at all out of harbour: and if we conſider the
" diſcourſe with which ſhe and Lucia begin the
" Act, we have reaſon to believe that they had
" hardly been talking of ſuch matters in the
" ſtreet. However, to pleaſure Sempronius, let
" us

"us ſuppoſe, for once, that the deer is "lodged:

"The deer is lodg'd, I've track'd her to her covert.

"If he had ſeen her in the open field, what "occaſion had he to track her, when he had "ſo many Numidian dogs at his heels, which, "with one halloo, he might have ſet upon "her haunches? If he did not ſee her in the "open field, how could he poſſibly track her? "If he had ſeen her in the ſtreet, why did he "not ſet upon her in the ſtreet, ſince through "the ſtreet ſhe muſt be carried at laſt? Now "here, inſtead of having his thoughts upon "his buſineſs, and upon the preſent danger; "inſtead of meditating and contriving how he "ſhall paſs with his miſtreſs through the "ſouthern gate, where her brother Marcus is "upon the guard, and where he would cer-"tainly prove an impediment to him, which "is the Roman word for the *baggage*; inſtead "of doing this, Sempronius is entertaining "himſelf with whimſies:

"*Sempr.* How will the young Numidian rave, to ſee
"His miſtreſs loſt! If aught could glad my ſoul,
"Beyond th' enjoyment of ſo bright a prize,

" 'Twould be to torture that young gay Barbarian.
" But hark! what noiſe? Death to my hopes,
" 'tis he,
" 'Tis Juba's ſelf! There is but one way left!
" He muſt be murder'd, and a paſſage cut
" Through thoſe his guards.

" Pray, what are 'thoſe his guards?' I " thought at preſent, that Juba's guards had " been Sempronius's tools, and had been dang- " ling after his heels.

" But now let us ſum up all theſe abſurdi- " ties together. Sempronius goes at noon-day, " in Juba's cloaths, and with Juba's guards, " to Cato's palace, in order to paſs for Juba, " in a place where they were both ſo very well " known: he meets Juba there, and reſolves " to murder him with his own guards. Upon " the guards appearing a little baſhful, he " threatens them:

" Hah! Daſtards, do you tremble!
" Or act like men, or by yon azure heav'n!

" But the guards ſtill remaining reſtive, Sem- " pronius himſelf attacks Juba, while each of " the guards is repreſenting Mr. Spectator's " ſign of the Gaper, awed, it ſeems, and terri-

" fied

"fied by Sempronius's threats. Juba kills "Sempronius, and takes his own army pri- "ſoners, and carries them in triumph away to "Cato. Now I would fain know, if any "part of Mr. Bayes's tragedy is ſo full of ab- "ſurdity as this?

"Upon hearing the claſh of ſwords, Lucia "and Marcia come in. The queſtion is, why "no men come in upon hearing the noiſe of "ſwords in the governor's hall? Where was "the governor himſelf? Where were his guards? "Where were his ſervants? Such an attempt "as this, ſo near the perſon of a governor of a "place of war, was enough to alarm the whole "garriſon: and yet, for almoſt half an hour "after Sempronius was killed, we find none "of thoſe appear, who were the likelieſt in the "world to be alarmed; and the noiſe of ſwords "is made to draw only two poor women thi- "ther, who were moſt certain to run away "from it. Upon Lucia and Marcia's coming "in, Lucia appears in all the ſymptoms of an "hyſterical gentlewoman:

"*Luc.* Sure 'twas the claſh of ſwords! my trou- "bled heart
"Is ſo caſt down, and ſunk amidſt its ſorrows,
"It throbs with fear, and akes at every ſound!

"And

" And immediately her old whimſy returns " upon her:

" O Marcia, ſhould thy brothers, for my ſake—
" I die away with horror at the thought.

" She fancies that there can be no cutting-of- " throats, but it muſt be for her. If this is " tragical, I would fain know what is comical. " Well! upon this they ſpy the body of Sem- " pronius; and Marcia, deluded by the habit, " it ſeems, takes him for Juba; for, ſays " ſhe,

" The face is muffled up within the garment.

" Now how a man could fight, and fall with " his face muffled up in his garment, is, I " think, a little hard to conceive! Beſides, " Juba, before he killed him, knew him to be " Sempronius. It was not by his garment that " he knew this; it was by his face then: his " face therefore was not muffled. Upon ſeeing " this man with his muffled face, Marcia falls " a-raving; and, owning her paſſion for the " ſuppoſed defunct, begins to make his fu- " neral oration. Upon which Juba enters " liſtening, I ſuppoſe on tip-toe: for I cannot " imagine

"imagine how any one can enter liſtening, in "any other poſture. I would fain know how "it came to paſs, that during all this time he "had ſent nobody, no not ſo much as a candle-"ſnuffer, to take away the dead body of Sem-"pronius. Well! but let us regard him "liſtening. Having left his apprehenſion be-"hind him, he, at firſt, applies what Marcia "ſays to Sempronius. But finding at laſt, with "much ado, that he himſelf is the happy man, "he quits his eve-dropping, and diſcovers him-"ſelf juſt time enough to prevent his being "cuckolded by a dead man, of whom the mo-"ment before he had appeared ſo jealous; and "greedily intercepts the bliſs, which was fondly "deſigned for one who could not be the better "for it. But here I muſt aſk a queſtion: "how comes Juba to liſten here, who had not "liſtened before throughout the play? Or, "how comes he to be the only perſon of this "tragedy who liſtens, when love and treaſon "were ſo often talked in ſo publick a place as "a hall? I am afraid the author was driven "upon all theſe abſurdities only to introduce "this miſerable miſtake of Marcia, which, "after all, is much below the dignity of tra-

"gedy,

" gedy, as any thing is which is the effect or " reſult of trick.

" But let us come to the ſcenery of the Fifth " Act. Cato appears firſt upon the ſcene, " ſitting in a thoughtful poſture; in his hand " Plato's treatiſe on the Immortality of the " Soul, a drawn ſword on the table by him. " Now let us conſider the place in which this " ſight is preſented to us. The place, forſooth, " is a long hall. Let us ſuppoſe, that any one " ſhould place himſelf in this poſture, in the " midſt of one of our halls in London; that " he ſhould appear *ſolus*, in a ſullen poſture, " a drawn ſword on the table by him; in his " hand Plato's treatiſe on the Immortality of " the Soul, tranſlated lately by Bernard Lintot: " I deſire the reader to conſider, whether ſuch " a perſon as this would paſs with them who " beheld him for a great patriot, a great philo- " ſopher, or a general, or for ſome whimſical " perſon who fancied himſelf all theſe; and " whether the people, who belonged to the " family, would think that ſuch a perſon " had a deſign upon their midrifs or his " own?

" In

"In ſhort, that Cato ſhould ſit long enough "in the aforeſaid poſture, in the midſt of this "large hall, to read over Plato's treatiſe on the "Immortality of the Soul, which is a lecture "of two long hours; that he ſhould propoſe to "himſelf to be private there upon that occa-"ſion; that he ſhould be angry with his ſon "for intruding there; then, that he ſhould "leave this hall upon the pretence of ſleep, "give himſelf the mortal wound in his bed-"chamber, and then be brought back into "that hall to expire, purely to ſhew his good-"breeding, and ſave his friends the trouble of "coming up to his bedchamber; all this ap-"pears to me to be improbable, incredible, "impoſſible."

Such is the cenſure of Dennis. There is, as Dryden expreſſes it, perhaps "too much horſe-"play in his raillery;" but if his jeſts are coarſe, his arguments are ſtrong. Yet as we love better to be pleaſed than to be taught, Cato is read, and the critick is neglected.

Fluſhed with conſciouſneſs of theſe detections of abſurdity in the conduct, he afterwards attacked the ſentiments of Cato; but he then amuſed

amuſed himſelf with petty cavils, and minute objections.

Of Addiſon's ſmaller poems, no particular mention is neceſſary; they have little that can employ or require a critick. The parallel of the Princes and Gods, in his verſes to Kneller, is often happy, but is too well known to be quoted.

His tranſlations, ſo far as I have compared them, want the exactneſs of a ſcholar. That he underſtood his authors cannot be doubted; but his verſions will not teach others to underſtand them, being too licentiouſly paraphraſtical. They are however, for the moſt part, ſmooth and eaſy; and, what is the firſt excellence of a tranſlator, ſuch as may be read with pleaſure by thoſe who do not know the originals.

His poetry is poliſhed and pure; the product of a mind too judicious to commit faults, but not ſufficiently vigorous to attain excellence. He has ſometimes a ſtriking line, or a ſhining paragraph; but in the whole he is warm rather than fervid, and ſhews more dexterity than ſtrength. He was however one of our earlieſt examples of correctneſs. The

The verſification which he had learned from Dryden he debaſed rather than refined. His rhymes are often diſſonant; in his Georgick he admits broken lines. He uſes both triplets and alexandrines, but triplets more frequently in his tranſlation than his other works. The mere ſtructure of verſes ſeems never to have engaged much of his care. But his lines are very ſmooth in Roſamond, and too ſmooth in Cato.

Addiſon is now to be conſidered as a critick; a name which the preſent generation is ſcarcely willing to allow him. His criticiſm is condemned as tentative or experimental, rather than ſcientifick, and he is conſidered as deciding by taſte rather than by principles.

It is not uncommon for thoſe who have grown wiſe by the labour of others, to add a little of their own, and overlook their maſters. Addiſon is now deſpiſed by ſome who perhaps would never have ſeen his defects, but by the lights which he afforded them. That he always wrote as he would think it neceſſary to write now, cannot be affirmed; his inſtructions were ſuch as the characters of his readers made proper. That general knowledge which now

now circulates in common talk, was in his time rarely to be found. Men not profeſſing learning were not aſhamed of ignorance; and in the female world, any acquaintance with books was diſtinguiſhed only to be cenſured. His purpoſe was to infuſe literary curioſity, by gentle and unſuſpected conveyance, into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy; he therefore preſented knowledge in the moſt alluring form, not lofty and auſtere, but acceſſible and familiar. When he ſhewed them their defects, he ſhewed them likewiſe that they might be eaſily ſupplied. His attempt ſucceeded; enquiry was awakened, and comprehenſion expanded. An emulation of intellectual elegance was excited, and from this time to our own, life has been gradually exalted, and converſation purified and enlarged.

Dryden had, not many years before, ſcattered criticiſm over his Prefaces with very little parſimony; but, though he ſometimes condeſcended to be ſomewhat familiar, his manner was in general too ſcholaſtick for thoſe who had yet their rudiments to learn, and found it not eaſy to underſtand their maſter. His obſervations were framed rather for thoſe that

that were learning to write, than for thoſe that read only to talk.

An inſtructor like Addiſon was now wanting, whoſe remarks being ſuperficial might be eaſily underſtood, and being juſt might prepare the mind for more attainments. Had he preſented *Paradiſe Loſt* to the publick with all the pomp of ſyſtem and ſeverity of ſcience, the criticiſm would perhaps have been admired, and the poem ſtill have been neglected; but by the blandiſhments of gentleneſs and facility, he has made Milton an univerſal favourite with whom readers of every claſs think it neceſſary to be pleaſed.

He deſcended now and then to lower diſquiſitions; and by a ſerious diſplay of the beauties of *Chevy Chaſe*, expoſed himſelf to the ridicule of Wagſtaff, who beſtowed a like pompous character on *Tom Thumb*; and to the contempt of Dennis, who, conſidering the fundamental poſition of his criticiſm, that *Chevy Chaſe* pleaſes, and ought to pleaſe, becauſe it is natural, obſerves, "that there is a way of deviating from nature, by bombaſt or tumour, which ſoars above nature, and enlarges images beyond their real bulk; by affectation, which forſakes

nature in queſt of ſomething unſuitable; and by imbecillity, which degrades nature by faintneſs and diminution, by obſcuring its appearances, and weakening its effects." In *Chevy Chaſe* there is not much of either bombaſt or affectation; but there is chill and lifeleſs imbecillity. The ſtory cannot poſſibly be told in a manner that ſhall make leſs impreſſion on the mind.

Before the profound obſervers of the preſent race repoſe too ſecurely on the conſciouſneſs of their ſuperiority to Addiſon, let them conſider his Remarks on Ovid, in which may be found ſpecimens of criticiſm ſufficiently ſubtle and refined: let them peruſe likewiſe his Eſſays on *Wit*, and on the *Pleaſures of Imagination*, in which he founds art on the baſe of nature, and draws the principles of invention from diſpoſitions inherent in the mind of man, with ſkill and elegance, ſuch as his contemners will not eaſily attain.

As a deſcriber of life and manners, he muſt be allowed to ſtand perhaps the firſt of the firſt rank. His humour, which, as Steele obſerves, is peculiar to himſelf, is ſo happily diffuſed as to give the grace of novelty to domeſtick ſcenes

and daily occurrences. He never "outſteps the "modeſty of nature," nor raiſes merriment or wonder by the violation of truth. His figures neither divert by diſtortion, nor amaze by aggravation. He copies life with ſo much fidelity, that he can be hardly ſaid to invent: yet his exhibitions have an air ſo much original, that it is difficult to ſuppoſe them not merely the product of imagination.

As a teacher of wiſdom, he may be confidently followed. His religion has nothing in it enthuſiaſtick or ſuperſtitious: he appears neither weakly credulous nor wantonly ſceptical; his morality is neither dangerouſly lax, nor impracticably rigid. All the enchantment of fancy, and all the cogency of argument, are employed to recommend to the reader his real intereſt, the care of pleaſing the Author of his being. Truth is ſhewn ſometimes as the phantom of a viſion; ſometimes appears half-veiled in an allegory; ſometimes attracts regard in the robes of fancy; and ſometimes ſteps forth in the confidence of reaſon. She wears a thouſand dreſſes, and in all is pleaſing.

Mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet.

His proſe is the model of the middle ſtyle; on grave ſubjects not formal, on light occaſions not grovelling; pure without ſcrupuloſity, and exact without apparent elaboration; always equable, and always eaſy, without glowing words or pointed ſentences. Addiſon never deviates from his track to ſnatch a grace; he ſeeks no ambitious ornaments, and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected ſplendour.

It was apparently his principal endeavour to avoid all harſhneſs and ſeverity of diction; he is therefore ſometimes verboſe in his tranſitions and connections, and ſometimes deſcends too much to the language of converſation; yet if his language had been leſs idiomatical, it might have loſt ſomewhat of its genuine Angliciſm. What he attempted, he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wiſh to be energetick; he is never rapid, and he never ſtagnates. His ſentences have neither ſtudied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and eaſy. Whoever wiſhes to attain

attain an Engliſh ſtyle, familiar but not coarſe, and elegant but not oſtentatious, muſt give his days and nights to the volumes of Addiſon.

HUGHES.

JOHN HUGHES, the ſon of a citizen in London, and of Anne Burgeſs, of an ancient family in Wiltſhire, was born at Marlborough, July 29, 1677. He was educated at a private ſchool; and though his advances in literature are, in the *Biographia*, very oſtentatiouſly diſplayed, the name of his maſter is ſomewhat ungratefully concealed *.

At nineteen he drew the plan of a tragedy; and paraphraſed, rather too diffuſely, the ode of Horace which begins "Integer Vitæ." To poetry he added the ſcience of muſick, in

* He was educated in a diſſenting academy, of which the rev. Mr. Thomas Rowe was tutor; and was a fellow ſtudent there with Dr. Iſaac Watts, Mr. Samuel Say, and other perſons of eminence. In the "Horæ Lyricæ" of Dr. Watts is a poem to the memory of Mr. Rowe. H.

which

which he ſeems to have attained conſiderable ſkill, together with the practice of deſign, or rudiments of painting.

His ſtudies did not withdraw him wholly from buſineſs, nor did buſineſs hinder him from ſtudy. He had a place in the office of ordnance; and was ſecretary to ſeveral commiſſions for purchaſing lands neceſſary to ſecure the royal docks at Chatham and Portſmouth; yet found time to acquaint himſelf with modern languages.

In 1697 he publiſhed a poem on the *Peace of Ryſwick*; and in 1699 another piece, called *The Court of Neptune*, on the return of king William, which he addreſſed to Mr. Montague, the general patron of the followers of the Muſes. The ſame year he produced a ſong on the duke of Glouceſter's birth-day.

He did not confine himſelf to poetry, but cultivated other kinds of writing with great ſucceſs; and about this time ſhewed his knowledge of human nature by an *Eſſay on the Pleaſure of being deceived*. In 1702 he publiſhed, on the death of king William, a Pindarick ode called *The Houſe of Naſſau*; and wrote another paraphraſe on the *Otium Divos* of Horace.

In 1703 his ode on Muſick was performed at Stationers Hall; and he wrote afterwards ſix cantatas, which were ſet to muſick by the greateſt maſter of that time, and ſeem intended to oppoſe or exclude the Italian opera, an exotick and irrational entertainment, which has been always combated, and always has prevailed.

His reputation was now ſo far advanced, that the publick began to pay reverence to his name; and he was ſolicited to prefix a preface to the tranſlation of *Boccalini*, a writer whoſe ſatirical vein coſt him his life in Italy; but who never, I believe, found many readers in this country, even though introduced by ſuch powerful recommendation.

He tranſlated Fontenelle's *Dialogues of the Dead*; and his verſion was perhaps read at that time, but is now neglected; for by a book not neceſſary, and owing its reputation wholly to its turn of diction, little notice can be gained but from thoſe who can enjoy the graces of the original. To the dialogues of Fontenelle he added two compoſed by himſelf; and, though not only an honeſt but a pious man, dedicated his work to the earl of Wharton. He judged

ſkil-

ſkilfully enough of his own intereſt; for Wharton, when he went lord lieutenant to Ireland, offered to take Hughes with him, and eſtabliſh him; but Hughes, having hopes or promiſes, from another man in power, of ſome proviſion more ſuitable to his inclination, declined Wharton's offer, and obtained nothing from the other.

He tranſlated the *Miſer* of Moliere, which he never offered to the Stage; and occaſionally amuſed himſelf with making verſions of favourite ſcenes in other plays.

Being now received as a wit among the wits, he paid his contributions to literary undertakings, and aſſiſted both the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian*. In 1712 he tranſlated Vertot's Hiſtory of the *Revolution of Portugal*; produced an *Ode to the Creator of the World, from the Fragments of Orpheus*; and brought upon the Stage an opera called *Calypſo and Telemachus*, intended to ſhew that the Engliſh language might be very happily adapted to muſick. This was impudently oppoſed by thoſe who were employed in the Italian opera; and, what cannot be told without indignation, the intruders had ſuch intereſt with the duke of Shrewſbury, then lord

lord chamberlain, who had married an Italian, as to obtain an obſtruction of the profits, though not an inhibition of the performance.

There was at this time a project formed by Tonſon for a tranſlation of the *Pharſalia*, by ſeveral hands; and Hughes engliſhed the tenth book. But this deſign, as muſt often happen where the concurrence of many is neceſſary, fell to the ground; and the whole work was afterwards performed by Rowe.

His acquaintance with the great writers of his time appears to have been very general; but of his intimacy with Addiſon there is a remarkable proof. It is told, on good authority, that *Cato* was finiſhed and played by his perſuaſion. It had long wanted the laſt act, which he was deſired by Addiſon to ſupply. If the requeſt was ſincere, it proceeded from an opinion, whatever it was, that did not laſt long; for when Hughes came in a week to ſhew him his firſt attempt, he found half an act written by Addiſon himſelf.

He afterwards publiſhed the works of *Spenſer*, with his Life, a Gloſſary, and a Diſcourſe on Allegorical Poetry; a work for which he was well qualified, as a judge of the beauties of

of writing, but perhaps wanted an antiquary's knowledge of the obſolete words. He did not much revive the curioſity of the publick; for near thirty years elapſed before his edition was reprinted. The ſame year produced his *Apollo and Daphne*, of which the ſucceſs was very earneſtly promoted by Steele, who, when the rage of party did not miſguide him, ſeems to have been a man of boundleſs benevolence.

Hughes had hitherto ſuffered the mortifications of a narrow fortune; but in 1717 the lord chancellor Cowper ſet him at eaſe, by making him ſecretary to the Commiſſions of the Peace; in which he afterwards, by a particular requeſt, deſired his ſucceſſor lord Parker to continue him. He had now affluence; but ſuch is human life, that he had it when his declining health could neither allow him long poſſeſſion nor quick enjoyment.

His laſt work was his tragedy, *The Siege of Damaſcus*, after which *a Siege* became a popular title. This play, which ſtill continues on the Stage, and of which it is unneceſſary to add a private voice to ſuch continuance of approbation, is not acted or printed according to the author's original draught, or his ſettled intention.

tion. He had made *Phocyas* apoſtatize from his religion; after which the abhorrence of *Eudocia* would have been reaſonable, his miſery would have been juſt, and the horrors of his repentance exemplary. The players, however, required that the guilt of *Phocyas* ſhould terminate in deſertion to the enemy; and Hughes, unwilling that his relations ſhould loſe the benefit of his work, complied with the alteration.

He was now weak with a lingering conſumption, and not able to attend the rehearſal, yet was ſo vigorous in his faculties, that only ten days before his death he wrote the dedication to his patron lord Cowper. On February 17, 1719-20, the play was repreſented, and the author died. He lived to hear that it was well received; but paid no regard to the intelligence, being then wholly employed in the meditations of a departing Chriſtian.

A man of his character was undoubtedly regretted; and Steele devoted an eſſay, in the paper called *The Theatre*, to the memory of his virtues. His life is written in the Biographia with ſome degree of favourable partiality; and an account of him is prefixed to his works, by his relation the late Mr. Duncombe, a man whoſe

whoſe blameleſs elegance deſerved the ſame reſpect.

The character of his genius I ſhall tranſcribe from the correſpondence of *Swift* and *Pope*.

"A month ago," ſays Swift, "was ſent me "over, by a friend of mine, the works of "*John Hughes*, Eſquire. They are in proſe "and verſe. I never heard of the man in my "life, yet I find your name as a ſubſcriber. "He is too grave a poet for me; and I think "among the *mediocriſts*, in proſe as well as "verſe."

To this Pope returns: "To anſwer your "queſtion as to Mr. *Hughes*; what he wanted "in genius, he made up as an honeſt man; "but he was of the claſs you think him."

In Spence's Collections Pope is made to ſpeak of him with ſtill leſs reſpect, as having no claim to poetical reputation but from his tragedy.

SHEF-

SHEFFIELD,
DUKE OF
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

JOHN SHEFFIELD, deſcended from a long ſeries of illuſtrious anceſtors, was born in 1649, the ſon of Edmund earl of Mulgrave, who died 1658. The young lord was put into the hands of a tutor, with whom he was ſo little ſatisfied, that he got rid of him in a ſhort time, and, at an age not exceeding twelve years, reſolved to educate himſelf. Such a purpoſe, formed at ſuch an age, and ſucceſſfully proſecuted, delights as it is ſtrange, and inſtructs as it is real.

His literary acquiſitions are more wonderful, as thoſe years in which they are commonly made were ſpent by him in the tumult of a mi-

litary

litary life, or the gaiety of a court. When war was declared againſt the Dutch, he went at ſeventeen on board the ſhip in which prince Rupert and the duke of Albemarle ſailed, with the command of the fleet; but by contrariety of winds they were reſtrained from action. His zeal for the king's ſervice was recompenſed by the command of one of the independent troops of horſe, then raiſed to protect the coaſt.

Next year he received a ſummons to parliament, which as he was then but eighteen years old, the earl of Northumberland cenſured as at leaſt indecent, and his objection was allowed. He had a quarrel with the earl of Rocheſter, which he has perhaps too oſtentatiouſly related, as Rocheſter's ſurviving ſiſter, the lady Sandwich, is ſaid to have told him with very ſharp reproaches.

When another Dutch war (1672) broke out, he went again a volunteer in the ſhip which the celebrated lord Oſſory commanded; and there made, as he relates, two curious remarks.

"I have obſerved two things, which I dare "affirm, though not generally believed. One "was, that the wind of a cannon-bullet,

"though

" though flying never ſo near, is incapable of " doing the leaſt harm; and indeed, were it " otherwiſe, no man above deck would eſcape. " The other was, that a great ſhot may be " ſometimes avoided, even as it flies, by " changing one's ground a little; for, when " the wind ſometimes blew away the ſmoke, " it was ſo clear a ſun-ſhiny day, that we could " eaſily perceive the bullets (that were half- " ſpent) fall into the water, and from thence " bound up again among us, which gives ſuf- " ficient time for making a ſtep or two on any " ſide; though in ſo ſwift a motion, 'tis hard " to judge well in what line the bullet comes, " which, if miſtaken, may by removing coſt " a man his life, inſtead of ſaving it."

His behaviour was ſo favourably repreſented by lord Oſſory, that he was advanced to the command of the Katherine, the beſt ſecond-rate ſhip in the navy.

He afterwards raiſed a regiment of foot, and commanded it as colonel. The land-forces were ſent aſhore by prince Rupert; and he lived in the camp very familiarly with Schomberg. He was then appointed colonel of the old Holland regiment, together with his own, and

and had the promiſe of a garter, which he obtained in his twenty-fifth year. He was likewiſe made gentleman of the bed-chamber.

He afterwards went into the French ſervice, to learn the art of war under Turenne, but ſtaid only a ſhort time. Being by the duke of Monmouth oppoſed in his pretenſions to the firſt troop of horſe-guards, he, in return, made Monmouth ſuſpected by the duke of York. He was not long after, when the unlucky Monmouth fell into diſgrace, recompenſed with the lieutenancy of Yorkſhire and the government of Hull.

Thus rapidly did he make his way both to military and civil honours and employments; yet, buſy as he was, he did not neglect his ſtudies, but at leaſt cultivated poetry; in which he muſt have been early conſidered as uncommonly ſkilful, if it be true which is reported, that, when he was yet not twenty years old, his recommendation advanced Dryden to the laurel.

The Moors having beſieged Tangier, he was ſent (1680) with two thouſand men to its relief. A ſtrange ſtory is told of danger to

which he was intentionally expoſed in a leaky ſhip, to gratify ſome reſentful jealouſy of the king, whoſe health he therefore would never permit at his table, till he ſaw himſelf in a ſafer place. His voyage was proſperouſly performed in three weeks, and the Moors without a conteſt retired before him.

In this voyage he compoſed the *Viſion*; a licentious poem, ſuch as was faſhionable in thoſe times, with little power of invention or propriety of ſentiment.

At his return he found the king kind, who perhaps had never been angry; and he continued a wit and a courtier as before.

At the ſucceſſion of king James, to whom he was intimately known, and by whom he thought himſelf beloved, he naturally expected ſtill brighter ſun-ſhine; but all know how ſoon that reign began to gather clouds. His expectations were not diſappointed; he was immediately admitted into the privy-council, and made lord chamberlain. He accepted a place in the high commiſſion, without knowledge, as he declared after the Revolution, of its illegality. Having few religious ſcruples, he attended the king to maſs, and kneeled with the reſt;

reſt; but had no diſpenſation to receive the Romiſh Faith, or to force it upon others; for when the prieſts, encouraged by his appearances of compliance, attempted to convert him, he told them, as Burnet has recorded, that he was willing to receive inſtruction, and that he had taken much pains to believe in God who made the world and all men in it; but that he ſhould not be eaſily perſuaded *that man was quits, and made God again.*

A pointed ſentence is beſtowed by ſucceſſive tranſmiſſion on the laſt whom it will fit; this cenſure of tranſubſtantiation, whatever be its value, was uttered long ago by Anne Aſkew, one of the firſt ſufferers for the Proteſtant Religion, who, in the time of Henry VIII. was tortured in the Tower; concerning which there is reaſon to wonder that it was not known to the Hiſtorian of the Reformation.

In the Revolution he acquieſced, though he did not promote it. There was once a deſign of aſſociating him in the invitation of the prince of Orange; but the earl of Shrewſbury diſcouraged the attempt, by declaring that Mulgrave would never concur. This king William afterwards told him, and aſked what

he would have done if the propoſal had been made. "Sir," ſaid he, "I would have diſ-"covered it to the king whom I then ſerved." To which king William replied, "I cannot "blame you."

Finding king James irremediably excluded, he voted for the conjunctive ſovereignty, upon this principle, that he thought the titles of the prince and his conſort equal, and it would pleaſe the prince their protector to have a ſhare in the ſovereignty. This vote gratified king William; yet, either by the king's diſtruſt or his own diſcontent, he lived ſome years without employment. He looked on the king with malevolence, and, if his verſes or his proſe may be credited, with contempt. He was, notwithſtanding this averſion or indifference, made marquis of Normanby (1694), but ſtill oppoſed the court on ſome important queſtions; yet at laſt he was received into the cabinet council, with a penſion of three thouſand pounds.

At the acceſſion of queen Anne, whom he is ſaid to have courted when they were both young, he was highly favoured. Before her coronation (1702) ſhe made him lord privy ſeal,

ſeal, and ſoon after lord lieutenant of the North-riding of Yorkſhire. He was then named commiſſioner for treating with the Scots about the Union; and was made next year firſt duke of Normanby, and then of Buckinghamſhire, there being ſuſpected to be ſomewhere a latent claim to the title of Buckingham.

Soon after, becoming jealous of the duke of Marlborough, he reſigned the privy ſeal, and joined the diſcontented Tories in a motion extremely offenſive to the Queen, for inviting the princeſs Sophia to England. The Queen courted him back with an offer no leſs than that of the chancellorſhip; which he refuſed. He now retired from buſineſs, and built that houſe in the Park, which is now the Queen's, upon ground granted by the Crown.

When the miniſtry was changed (1710), he was made lord chamberlain of the houſehold, and concurred in all tranſactions of that time, except that he endeavoured to protect the Catalans. After the Queen's death, he became a conſtant opponent of the Court; and, having no public buſineſs, is ſuppoſed to have amuſed himſelf by writing his two tragedies. He died February 24, 1720-21.

He was thrice married; by his two firſt wives he had no children: by his third, who was the daughter of king James by the counteſs of Dorcheſter, and the widow of the earl of Angleſey, he had, beſides other children that died early, a ſon born in 1716, who died in 1735, and put an end to the line of Sheffield. It is obſervable, that the Duke's three wives were all widows. The Dutcheſs died in 1742.

His character is not to be propoſed as worthy of imitation. His religion he may be ſuppoſed to have learned from Hobbes; and his morality was ſuch as naturally proceeds from looſe opinions. His ſentiments with reſpect to women he picked up in the court of Charles; and his principles concerning property were ſuch as a gaming-table ſupplies. He was cenſured as covetous, and has been defended by an inſtance of inattention to his affairs, as if a man might not at once be corrupted by avarice and idleneſs. He is ſaid, however, to have had much tenderneſs, and to have been very ready to apologiſe for his violences of paſſion.

He is introduced into this collection only as a poet; and, if we credit the teſtimony of his con-

contemporaries, he was a poet of no vulgar rank. But favour and flattery are now at an end; criticiſm is no longer ſoftened by his bounties or awed by his ſplendor, and, being able to take a more ſteady view, diſcovers him to be a writer that ſometimes glimmers, but rarely ſhines, feebly laborious, and at beſt but pretty. His ſongs are upon common topicks; he hopes, and grieves, and repents, and deſpairs, and rejoices, like any other maker of little ſtanzas: to be great, he hardly tries; to be gay, is hardly in his power.

In the Eſſay on Satire he was always ſuppoſed to have had the help of Dryden. His Eſſay on Poetry is the great work, for which he was praiſed by Roſcommon, Dryden, and Pope, and doubtleſs by many more whoſe eulogies have periſhed.

Upon this piece he appears to have ſet a high value; for he was all his life improving it by ſucceſſive reviſals, ſo that there is ſcarcely any poem to be found of which the laſt edition differs more from the firſt. Amongſt other changes, mention is made of ſome compoſitions of Dryden, which were written after the firſt appearance of the Eſſay.

At the time when this work firſt appeared, Milton's fame was not yet fully eſtabliſhed, and therefore Taſſo and Spenſer were ſet before him. The two laſt lines were theſe. The Epic Poet, ſays he,

> Muſt above Milton's lofty flights prevail,
> Succeed where great Torquato, and where greater
> Spenſer fail.

The laſt line in ſucceeding editions was ſhortened, and the order of names continued; but now Milton is at laſt advanced to the higheſt place, and the paſſage thus adjuſted,

> Muſt above Taſſo's lofty flights prevail,
> Succeed where Spenſer, and ev'n Milton fail.

Amendments are ſeldom made without ſome token of a rent: *lofty* does not ſuit Taſſo ſo well as Milton.

One celebrated line ſeems to be borrowed. The Eſſay calls a perfect character

> A faultleſs monſter which the world ne'er ſaw.

Scaliger, in his poems, terms Virgil *ſine labe monſtrum*. Sheffield can ſcarcely be ſuppoſed to have read Scaliger's poetry, perhaps he found the words in a quotation.

Of

Of this Eſſay, which Dryden has exalted ſo highly, it may be juſtly ſaid that the precepts are judicious, ſometimes new, and often happily expreſſed; but there are, after all the emendations, many weak lines, and ſome ſtrange appearances of negligence; as, when he gives the laws of elegy, he inſiſts upon connection and coherence; without which, ſays he,

'Tis epigram, 'tis point, 'tis what you will;
But not an elegy, nor writ with ſkill,
No Panegyrick, nor a Cooper's Hill.

Who would not ſuppoſe that Waller's Panegyrick and Denham's Cooper's Hill were Elegies?

His verſes are often inſipid; but his memoirs are lively and agreeable; he had the perſpicuity and elegance of an hiſtorian, but not the fire and fancy of a poet.

PRIOR.

PRIOR.

MATTHEW PRIOR is one of thoſe that have burſt out from an obſcure original to great eminence. He was born July 21, 1664, according to ſome, at Winburne in Dorſetſhire, of I know not what parents; others ſay that he was the ſon of a Joiner of London: he was perhaps willing enough to leave his birth unſettled *, in hope, like Don Quixote, that the hiſtorian of his actions might find him ſome illuſtrious alliance.

* The difficulty of ſettling Prior's birth-place is great. In the regiſter of his College he is called, at his admiſſion by the Preſident, *Matthew Prior* of *Winburn* in *Middleſex*; by himſelf next day, *Matthew Prior* of *Dorſetſhire*, in which county, not in Middleſex, *Winborn*, or *Wimborne* as it ſtands in the *Villare*, is found. When he ſtood candidate for his fellowſhip, five years afterwards, he was regiſtered again by himſelf as of *Middleſex*. The laſt record ought to be preferred, becauſe it was made upon oath. It is obſervable, that, as a native of *Winborne*, he is ſtiled *Filius Georgii Prior, generoſi*; not conſiſtently with the common account of the meanneſs of his birth. Dr. J.

He

He is ſuppoſed to have fallen, by his father's death, into the hands of his uncle, a vintner * near Charing-croſs, who ſent him for ſome time to Dr. Buſby at Weſtminſter; but, not intending to give him any education beyond that of the ſchool, took him, when he was well advanced in literature, to his own houſe, where the earl of Dorſet, celebrated for patronage of genius, found him by chance, as Burnet relates, reading Horace, and was ſo well pleaſed with his proficiency, that he undertook the care and coſt of his academical education.

He entered his name in St. John's College at Cambridge in 1682, in his eighteenth year; and it may be reaſonably ſuppoſed that he was diſtinguiſhed among his contemporaries. He became a Bachelor, as is uſual, in four years †; and two years afterwards wrote the poem on the *Deity*, which ſtands firſt in his volume.

* Samuel Prior kept the Rummer Tavern near Charing Croſs in 1685. The annual feaſt of the nobility and gentry living in the pariſh of St. Martin in the Fields was held at his houſe, Oct. 14, that year. N.

† He was admitted to his Bachelor's degree in 1686, and to his Maſter's, by mandate, in 1709. H.

It is the eſtabliſhed practice of that College, to ſend every year to the earl of Exeter ſome poems upon ſacred ſubjects, in acknowledgement of a benefaction enjoyed by them from the bounty of his anceſtor. On this occaſion were thoſe verſes written, which, though nothing is ſaid of their ſucceſs, ſeem to have recommended him to ſome notice; for his praiſe of the counteſs's muſick, and his lines on the famous picture of Seneca, afford reaſon for imagining that he was more or leſs converſant with that family.

The ſame year he publiſhed the *City Mouſe and Country Mouſe*, to ridicule Dryden's *Hind and Panther*, in conjunction with Mr. Montague. There is a ſtory * of great pain ſuffered, and of tears ſhed, on this occaſion, by Dryden, who thought it hard that "an old man "ſhould be ſo treated by thoſe to whom he "had always been civil." By tales like theſe is the envy, raiſed by ſuperior abilities, every day gratified: when they are attacked, every one hopes to ſee them humbled; what is hoped is readily believed, and what is believed is confidently told. Dryden had been more accuſ-

* Spence.

tomed

tomed to hoſtilities, than that ſuch enemies ſhould break his quiet; and if we can ſuppoſe him vexed, it would be hard to deny him ſenſe enough to conceal his uneaſineſs.

The *City Mouſe and Country Mouſe* procured its authors more ſolid advantages than the pleaſure of fretting Dryden; for they were both ſpeedily preferred. Montague, indeed, obtained the firſt notice, with ſome degree of diſcontent, as it ſeems, in Prior, who probably knew that his own part of the performance was the beſt. He had not, however, much reaſon to complain; for he came to London, and obtained ſuch notice, that (in 1691) he was ſent to the Congreſs at the Hague as ſecretary to the embaſſy. In this aſſembly of princes and nobles, to which Europe has perhaps ſcarcely ſeen any thing equal, was formed the grand alliance againſt Lewis; which at laſt did not produce effects proportionate to the magnificence of the tranſaction.

The conduct of Prior, in this ſplendid initiation into public buſineſs, was ſo pleaſing to king William, that he made him one of the gentlemen of his bed-chamber; and he is ſuppoſed to have paſſed ſome of the next years in the quiet cultivation of literature and poetry.

The

The death of Queen Mary (in 1695) produced a ſubject for all the writers: perhaps no funeral was ever ſo poetically attended. Dryden, indeed, as a man diſcountenanced and deprived, was ſilent; but ſcarcely any other maker of verſes omitted to bring his tribute of tuneful ſorrow. An emulation of elegy was univerſal. Maria's praiſe was not confined to the Engliſh language, but fills a great part of the *Muſæ Anglicanæ*.

Prior, who was both a poet and a courtier, was too diligent to miſs this opportunity of reſpect. He wrote a long ode, which was preſented to the king, by whom it was not likely to be ever read.

In two years he was ſecretary to another embaſſy at the treaty of Ryſwick (in 1697*); and next year had the ſame office at the court of France, where he is ſaid to have been conſidered with great diſtinction.

As he was one day ſurveying the apartments at Verſailles, being ſhewn the Victories of Lewis, painted by Le Brun, and aſked whether the king of England's palace had any ſuch

* He received, in September 1697, a preſent of 200 guineas from the lords juſtices, for his trouble in bringing over the treaty of peace. N.

de-

decorations; "The monuments of my Maſ-
"ter's actions," ſaid he, "are to be ſeen every
"where but in his own houſe." The pictures of Le Brun are not only in themſelves ſufficiently oſtentatious, but were explained by inſcriptions ſo arrogant, that Boileau and Racine thought it neceſſary to make them more ſimple.

He was in the following year at Loo with the king; from whom, after a long audience, he carried orders to England, and upon his arrival became under-ſecretary of ſtate in the earl of Jerſey's office; a poſt which he did not retain long, becauſe Jerſey was removed; but he was ſoon made commiſſioner of Trade.

This year (1700) produced one of his longeſt and moſt ſplendid compoſitions, the *Carmen Seculare*, in which he exhauſts all his powers of celebration. I mean not to accuſe him of flattery; he probably thought all that he writ, and retained as much veracity as can be properly exacted from a poet profeſſedly encomiaſtic. King William ſupplied copious materials for either verſe or proſe. His whole life had been action, and none ever denied him the reſplendent qualities of ſteady reſolution and perſonal courage. He was really in Prior's mind

mind what he repreſents him in his verſes; he conſidered him as a hero, and was accuſtomed to ſay, that he praiſed others in compliance with the faſhion, but that in celebrating king William he followed his inclination. To Prior gratitude would dictate praiſe, which reaſon would not refuſe.

Among the advantages to ariſe from the future years of William's reign, he mentions a *Society for uſeful Arts*, and among them

Some that with care true eloquence ſhall teach,
And to juſt idioms fix our doubtful ſpeech;
That from our writers diſtant realms may know
The thanks we to our monarchs owe,
And ſchools profeſs our tongue through every land,
That has invok'd his aid, or bleſs'd his hand.

Tickell, in his *Proſpect of Peace*, has the ſame hope of a new academy:

In happy chains our daring language bound,
Shall ſport no more in arbitrary ſound.

Whether the ſimilitude of thoſe paſſages which exhibit the ſame thought on the ſame occaſion proceeded from accident or imitation, is not eaſy to determine. Tickell might have been im-

impreſſed with his expectation by Swift's *Propoſal for aſcertaining the Engliſh Language*, then lately publiſhed.

In the parliament that met in 1701, he was choſen repreſentative of Eaſt Grinſtead. Perhaps it was about this time that he changed his party; for he voted for the impeachment of thoſe lords who had perſuaded the king to the Partition-treaty, a treaty in which he had himſelf been miniſterially employed.

A great part of queen Anne's reign was a time of war, in which there was little employment for negotiators, and Prior had therefore leiſure to make or to poliſh verſes. When the battle of Blenheim called forth all the verſemen, Prior, among the reſt, took care to ſhew his delight in the increaſing honour of his country by an Epiſtle to Boileau.

He publiſhed, ſoon afterwards, a volume of poems, with the encomiaſtic character of his deceaſed patron the duke of Dorſet: it began with the College Exerciſe, and ended with the *Nut-brown Maid*.

The battle of Ramilies ſoon afterwards (in 1706) excited him to another effort of poetry. On this occaſion he had fewer or leſs formida-

ble rivals; and it would be not eaſy to name any other compoſition produced by that event which is now remembered.

Every thing has its day. Through the reigns of William and Anne no proſperous event paſſed undignified by poetry. In the laſt war, when France was diſgraced and overpowered in every quarter of the globe, when Spain, coming to her aſſiſtance, only ſhared her calamities, and the name of an Engliſhman was reverenced through Europe, no poet was heard amidſt the general acclamation; the fame of our counſellors and heroes was intruſted to the Gazetteer.

The nation in time grew weary of the war, and the queen grew weary of her miniſters. The war was burdenſome, and the miniſters were inſolent. Harley and his friends began to hope that they might, by driving the Whigs from court and from power, gratify at once the queen and the people. There was now a call for writers, who might convey intelligence of paſt abuſes, and ſhew the waſte of public money, the unreaſonable *Conduct of the Allies*, the avarice of generals, the tyranny of minions, and the general danger of approaching ruin.

For

For this purpoſe a paper called the *Examiner* was periodically publiſhed, written as it happened, by any wit of the party, and ſome times as is ſaid by Mrs Manley. Some are owned by Swift; and one, in ridicule of Garth's verſes to Godolphin upon the loſs of his place, was written by Prior, and anſwered by Addiſon, who appears to have known the author either by conjecture or intelligence.

The Tories, who were now in power, were in haſte to end the war; and Prior, being recalled (1710) to his former employment of making treaties, was ſent (July 1711) privately to Paris with propoſitions of peace. He was remembered at the French court; and returning in about a month, brought with him the Abbé Gaultier, and M. Meſnager, a miniſter from France, inveſted with full powers.

This tranſaction not being avowed, Mackay, the maſter of the Dover packet-boat, either zealouſly or officiouſly, ſeized Prior and his aſſociates at Canterbury. It is eaſily ſuppoſed that they were ſoon releaſed.

The negotiation was begun at Prior's houſe, where the Queen's miniſters met Meſnager (September 20, 1711) and entered privately

upon the great buſineſs. The importance of Prior appears from the mention made of him by St. John in his Letter to the Queen.

"My Lord Treaſurer moved, and all my "Lords were of the ſame opinion, that Mr. "Prior ſhould be added to thoſe who are em- "powered to ſign; the reaſon for which is, "becauſe he, having perſonally treated with "Monſieur de Torcy, is the beſt witneſs we "can produce of the ſenſe in which the gene- "ral preliminary engagements are entered into: "beſides which, as he is the beſt verſed in "matters of trade of all your Majeſty's ſervants "who have been truſted in this ſecret, if you "ſhall think fit to employ him in the future "treaty of commerce, it will be of conſequence "that he has been a party concerned in con- "cluding that convention, which muſt be the "rule of this treaty."

The aſſembly of this important night was in ſome degree clandeſtine, the deſign of treating not being yet openly declared, and, when the Whigs returned to power, was aggravated to a charge of high treaſon; though, as Prior remarks in his imperfect anſwer to the Report of the *Committee of Secrecy*, no treaty ever was made

made without private interviews and preliminary diſcuſſions.

My buſineſs is not the hiſtory of the peace, but the life of Prior. The conferences began at Utrecht on the firſt of January (1711-12), and the Engliſh plenipotentiaries arrived on the fifteenth. The miniſters of the different potentates conferred and conferred; but the peace advanced ſo ſlowly, that ſpeedier methods were found neceſſary; and Bolingbroke was ſent to Paris to adjuſt differences with leſs formality; Prior either accompanied him or followed him; and after his departure had the appointments and authority of an ambaſſador, though no public character.

By ſome miſtake of the Queen's orders, the court of France had been diſguſted; and Bolingbroke ſays in his Letter, "Dear Mat, hide "the nakedneſs of thy country, and give the "beſt turn thy fertile brain will furniſh thee "with to the blunders of thy countrymen, who "are not much better politicians than the "French are poets."

Soon after, the duke of Shrewſbury went on a formal embaſſy to Paris. It is related by Boyer, that the intention was to have joined

Prior in the commiſſion, but that Shrewſbury refuſed to be aſſociated with a man ſo meanly born. Prior therefore continued to act without a title till the duke returned next year to England, and then he aſſumed the ſtyle and dignity of embaſſador.

But, while he continued in appearancea private man, he was treated with confidence by Lewis, who ſent him with a letter to the Queen, written in favour of the elector of Bavaria. "I "ſhall expect," ſays he, "with impatience, "the return of Mr. Prior, whoſe conduct is "very agreeable to me." And while the Duke of Shrewſbury was ſtill at Paris, Bolingbroke wrote to Prior thus: "Monſieur de Torcy has "a confidence in you; make uſe of it, once "for all, upon this occaſion, and convince "him thoroughly, that we muſt give a differ-"ent turn to our parliament and our people, "according to their reſolution at this criſis."

Prior's public dignity and ſplendour commenced in Auguſt 1713, and continued till the Auguſt following; but I am afraid that, according to the uſual fate of greatneſs, it was attended with ſome perplexities and mortifications. He had not all that is cuſtomarily given

to

to ambaſſadors: he hints to the Queen, in an imperfect poem, that he had no ſervice of plate; and it appeared, by the debts which he contracted, that his remittances were not punctually made.

On the firſt of Auguſt, 1714, enſued the downfall of the Tories, and the degradation of Prior. He was recalled; but was not able to return, being detained by the debts which he had found it neceſſary to contract, and which were not diſcharged before March, though his old friend Montague was now at the head of the treaſury.

He returned then as ſoon as he could, and was welcomed on the 25th of March by a warrant, but was, however, ſuffered to live in his own houſe, under the cuſtody of the meſſenger, till he was examined before a committee of the Privy Council, of which Mr. Walpole was chairman, and Lord Coningſby, Mr. Stanhope, and Mr. Lechmere, were the principal interrogators; who, in this examination, of which there is printed an account not unentertaining, behaved with the boiſterouſneſs of men elated by recent authority. They are repreſented as aſking queſtions ſometimes vague,

ſometimes inſidious, and writing anſwers different from thoſe which they received. Prior, however, ſeems to have been overpowered by their turbulence; for he confeſſes that he ſigned what, if he had ever come before a legal judicature, he ſhould have contradicted or explained away. The oath was adminiſtered by Boſcawen, a Middleſex juſtice, who at laſt was going to write his atteſtation on the wrong ſide of the paper.

They were very induſtrious to find ſome charge againſt Oxford; and aſked Prior, with great earneſtneſs, who was preſent when the preliminary articles were talked of or ſigned at his houſe? He told them, that either the earl of Oxford or the duke of Shrewſbury was abſent, but he could not remember which; an anſwer which perplexed them, becauſe it ſupplied no accuſation againſt either. "Could "any thing be more abſurd," ſays he, "or "more inhuman, than to propoſe to me a queſ-"tion, by the anſwering of which I might, "according to them, prove myſelf a traitor? "And notwithſtanding their ſolemn promiſe, "that nothing which I could ſay ſhould hurt "myſelf, I had no reaſon to truſt them: for "they

"they violated that promiſe about five hours "after. However, I owned I was there pre- "ſent. Whether this was wiſely done or no "I leave to my friends to determine."

When he had ſigned the paper, he was told by Walpole, that the committee were not ſatisfied with his behaviour, nor could give ſuch an account of it to the Commons as might merit favour; and that they now thought a ſtricter confinement neceſſary than to his own houſe. "Here," ſays he, "Boſcawen played "the moraliſt, and Coningſby the chriſtian, "but both very aukwardly." The meſſenger, in whoſe cuſtody he was to be placed, was then called, and very decently aſked by Coningſby, "if his houſe was ſecured by bars and "bolts?" The meſſenger anſwered, "No," with aſtoniſhment. At which Coningſby very angrily ſaid, "Sir, you muſt ſecure this pri- "ſoner; it is for the ſafety of the nation: if "he eſcape, you ſhall anſwer for it."

They had already printed their report; and in this examination were endeavouring to find proofs.

He continued thus confined for ſome time and Mr. Walpole (June 10, 1715) moved for an

an impeachment againſt him. What made him ſo acrimonious does not appear: he was by nature no thirſter for blood. Prior was a week after committed to cloſe cuſtody, with orders that "no perſon ſhould be admitted "to ſee him without leave from the Speaker."

When, two years after, an Act of Grace was paſſed, he was excepted, and continued ſtill in cuſtody, which he had made leſs tedious by writing his *Alma*. He was, however, ſoon after diſcharged.

He had now his liberty, but he had nothing elſe. Whatever the profit of his employments might have been, he had always ſpent it; and at the age of fifty-three was, with all his abilities, in danger of penury, having yet no ſolid revenue but from the fellowſhip of his college, which, when in his exaltation he was cenſured for retaining it, he ſaid, he could live upon at laſt.

Being however generally known and eſteemed, he was encouraged to add other poems to thoſe which he had printed, and to publiſh them by ſubſcription. The expedient ſucceeded by the induſtry of many friends, who circulated the propoſals,

propoſals*, and the care of ſome, who, it is ſaid, withheld the money from him leſt he ſhould ſquader it. The price of the volume was two guineas; the whole collection was four thouſand; to which lord Harley, the ſon of the earl of Oxford, to whom he had invariably adhered, added an equal ſum for the purchaſe of Down-hall, which Prior was to enjoy during life, and Harley after his deceaſe.

He had now, what wits and philoſophers have often wiſhed, the power of paſſing the day in contemplative tranquillity. But it ſeems that buſy men ſeldom live long in a ſtate of quiet. It is not unlikely that his health declined. He complains of deafneſs; "for," ſays he, "I took little care of my ears while I "was not ſure if my head was my own."

Of any occurrences in his remaining life I have found no account. In a letter to Swift, "I have," ſays he, "treated lady Harriot at "Cambridge; (a Fellow of a College treat!) "and ſpoke verſes to her in a gown and cap! "What, the plenipotentiary, ſo far concerned

* Swift obtained *many* Subſcriptions for him in Ireland. H.

"in

" in the damned peace at Utrecht! the man " that makes up half the volume of terſe proſe, " that makes up the report of the committee, " ſpeaking verſes! *Sic eſt, homo ſum.*"

He died at *Wimpole*, a ſeat of the earl of Oxford, on the eighteenth of September 1721, and was buried in Weſtminſter; where on a monument, for which, as the " laſt piece of " human vanity," he left five hundred pounds, is engraven this epitaph:

Sui Temporis Hiſtoriam meditanti,
Paulatim obrepens Febris
Operi ſimul & Vitæ filum abrupit,
Sept. 18. An. Dom. 1721, Ætat. 57.
H. S. E.
Vir Eximius
Sereniſſimis
Regi GULIELMO Reginæque MARIÆ
In Congreſſione Fœderatorum
Hagæ anno 1690 celebrata,
Deinde Magnæ Britanniæ Legatis
Tum iis,
Qui anno 1697 Pacem RYSWICKI confecerunt,
Tum iis,
Qui apud Gallos annis proximis Legationem obierunt;
Eodem etiam anno 1697 in Hibernia
SECRETARIUS;

Nec

Necnon in utroque Honorabili conſeſſu
Eorum,
Qui anno 1700 ordinandis Commercii negotiis
Quique anno 1711 dirigendis Portorii rebus,
Præſidebant,
COMMISSIONARIUS;
Poſtremo
Ab ANNA
Feliciſſimæ memoriæ Reginâ
Ad LUDOVICUM XIV. Galliæ Regem
Miſſus anno 1711
De Pace ſtabilienda,
(Pace etiamnum durante
Diuque ut boni jam omnes ſperant duratura)
Cum ſumma poteſtate Legatus.
MATTHÆUS PRIOR Armiger;
Qui
Hos omnes, quibus cumulatus eſt, Titulos
Humanitatis, Ingenii, Eruditionis laude
Superavit;
Cui enim naſcenti faciles arriſerant Muſæ.
Hunc Puerum Schola hic Regia perpolivit;
Juvenem in Collegio S'ti Johannis
Cantabrigia optimis Scientiis inſtruxit;
Virum denique auxit; & perfecit
Multa cum viris Principibus conſuetudo;
Ita natus, ita inſtitutus,
A Vatum Choro avelli nunquam potuit,
Sed ſolebat ſæpe rerum Civilium gravitatem
Amœniorum

Amœniorum Literarum Studiis condire:
Et cum omne adeo Poetices genus
Haud infeliciter tentaret,
Tum in Fabellis concinne lepideque texendis
Mirus Artifex
Neminem habuit parem.
Hæc liberalis animi oblectamenta:
Quam nullo Illi labore conſtiterint,
Facile ii perſpexere, quibus uſus eſt Amici;
Apud quos Urbanitatum & Leporum plenus
Cum ad rem, quæcunque forte inciderat,
Aptè variè copioſèque alluderet,
Interea nihil quæſitum, nihil vi expreſſum
Videbatur,
Sed omnia ultro effluere,
Et quaſi jugi e fonte affatim exuberare,
Ita ſuos tandem dubios reliquit,
Eſſetne in Scriptis, Poeta Elegantior,
An in Convictu, Comes Jucundior.

Of Prior, eminent as he was, both by his abilities and ſtation, very few memorials have been left by his contemporaries; the account therefore muſt now be deſtitute of his private character and familiar practices. He lived at a time when the rage of party detected all which it was any man's intereſt to hide; and as little ill is heard of Prior, it is certain that not much

was

was known. He was not afraid of provoking cenſure; for when he forſook the Whigs *, under whoſe patronage he firſt entered the world, he became a Tory ſo ardent and determinate, that he did not willingly conſort with men of different opinions. He was one of the ſixteen Tories who met weekly, and agreed to addreſs each other by the title of *Brother*; and ſeems to have adhered, not only by concurrence of political deſigns, but by peculiar affection, to the earl of Oxford and his family. With how much confidence he was truſted, has been already told.

He was however, in Pope's * opinion, fit only to make verſes, and leſs qualified for buſineſs than Addiſon himſelf. This was ſurely ſaid without conſideration. Addiſon, exalted to a high place, was forced into degradation by the ſenſe of his own incapacity; Prior, who was employed by men very capable of eſtimating his value, having been ſecretary to one embaſſy, had, when great abilities were again wanted, the ſame office another time; and was, after ſo much experience of his knowledge

* Spence.

and

and dexterity, at laſt ſent to tranſact a negotiation in the higheſt degree arduous and important; for which he was qualified, among other requiſites, in the opinion of Bolingbroke, by his influence upon the French miniſter, and by ſkill in queſtions of commerce above other men.

Of his behaviour in the lighter parts of life, it is too late to get much intelligence. One of his anſwers to a boaſtful Frenchman has been related, and to an impertinent he made another equally proper. During his embaſſy, he ſat at the opera by a man, who, in his rapture, accompanied with his own voice the principal ſinger. Prior fell to railing at the performer with all the terms of reproach that he could collect, till the Frenchman ceaſing from his ſong, began to expoſtulate with him for his harſh cenſure of a man who was confeſſedly the ornament of the ſtage. "I know that," ſays the ambaſſador, "mais il chante ſi haut, que "je ne ſcaurois vous entendre."

In a gay French company, where every one ſung a little ſong or ſtanza, of which the burden was, "Banniſons la Melancholie;" when it came to his turn to ſing, after the perform-

ance

ance of a young lady that ſat next him, he produced theſe extemporary lines:

Mais celle voix, et ces beaux yeux,
Font Cupidon trop dangereux,
Et je ſuis triſte quand je crie
Banniſſons la Melancholie.

Tradition repreſents him as willing to deſcend from the dignity of the poet and ſtateſman to the low delights of mean company. His Chloe probably was ſometimes ideal: but the woman with whom he cohabited was a deſpicable drab * of the loweſt ſpecies. One of his wenches, perhaps Chloe, while he was abſent from his houſe, ſtole his plate, and ran away; as was related by a woman who had been his ſervant. Of this propenſity to ſordid converſe I have ſeen an account ſo ſeriouſly ridiculous, that it ſeems to deſerve inſertion †.

"I have been aſſured that Prior, after hav-
"ing ſpent the evening with Oxford, Boling-
"broke, Pope, and Swift, would go and ſmoke
"a pipe, and drink a bottle of ale, with a com-
"mon ſoldier and his wife, in Long-Acre,

* Spence; [and ſee Gent. Mag. vol. LVII. p. 1039.]
† Richardſoniana.

" before he went to bed; not from any remains
" of the lowneſs of his original, as one ſaid,
" but, I ſuppoſe, that his faculties,

" —Strain'd to the height,
" In that celeſtial colloquy ſublime,
" Dazzled and ſpent, ſunk down, and ſought repair."

Poor Prior, why was he ſo *ſtrained*, and in ſuch *want* of *repair*, after a converſation with men not, in the opinion of the world, much wiſer than himſelf? But ſuch are the conceits of ſpeculatiſts, who *ſtrain* their *faculties* to find in a mine what lies upon the ſurface.

His opinions, ſo far as the means of judging are left us, ſeem to have been right; but his life was, it ſeems, irregular, negligent, and ſenſual.

PRIOR has written with great variety, and his variety has made him popular. He has tried all ſtyles from the groteſque to the ſolemn, and has not ſo failed in any as to incur deriſion or diſgrace.

His works may be diſtinctly conſidered as compriſing Tales, Love-verſes, Occaſional Poems, Alma, and Solomon.

His

His Tales have obtained general approbation, being written with great familiarity and great ſpritelineſs; the language is eaſy, but ſeldom groſs, and the numbers ſmooth, without appearance of care. Of theſe tales there are only four. The *Ladle*, which is introduced by a Preface, neither neceſſary nor pleaſing, neither grave nor merry. *Paulo Purganti*; which has likewiſe a Preface, but of more value than the Tale. *Hans Carvel*, not over decent; and *Protogenes* and *Apelles*, an old ſtory, mingled, by an affectation not diſagreeable, with modern images. The *Young Gentleman in Love* has hardly a juſt claim to the title of *a Tale*. I know not whether he be the original author of any Tale which he has given us. The Adventure of *Hans Carvel* has paſſed through many ſucceſſions of merry wits; for it is to be found in Arioſto's Satires, and is perhaps yet older. But the merit of ſuch ſtories is the art of telling them.

In his Amorous Effuſions he is leſs happy; for they are not dictated by nature or by paſſion, and have neither gallantry nor tenderneſs. They have the coldneſs of Cowley, without his wit, the dull exerciſes of a ſkillful verſifier, reſolved

at all adventures to write ſomething about Chloe, and trying to be amorous by dint of ſtudy. His fictions therefore are mythological. Venus, after the example of the Greek Epigram, aſks when ſhe was ſeen *naked and bathing*. Then *Cupid* is *miſtaken*; then *Cupid* is *diſarmed*; then he loſes his darts to *Ganymede*; then *Jupiter* ſends him a ſummons by *Mercury*. Then *Chloe* goes a-hunting, with an *ivory quiver graceful at her ſide*; Diana miſtakes her for one of her nymphs, and Cupid laughs at the blunder. All this is ſurely deſpicable; and even when he tries to act the lover, without the help of gods or goddeſſes, his thoughts are unaffecting or remote. He talks not "like a man of this "world."

The greateſt of all his amorous eſſays is *Henry* and *Emma*; a dull and tedious dialogue, which excites neither eſteem for the man, nor tenderneſs for the woman. The example of Emma, who reſolves to follow an outlawed murderer wherever fear and guilt ſhall drive him, deſerves no imitation; and the experiment by which Henry tries the lady's conſtancy is ſuch as muſt end either in

in infamy to her, or in diſappointment to himſelf.

His occaſional poems neceſſarily loſt part of their value, as their occaſions, being leſs remembered, raiſed leſs emotion. Some of them, however, are preſerved by their inherent excellence. The burleſque of Boileau's Ode on Namur has, in ſome parts, ſuch airineſs and levity, as will always procure it readers, even among thoſe who cannot compare it with the original. The Epiſtle to Boileau is not ſo happy. The Poems to the King are now peruſed only by young ſtudents, who read merely that they may learn to write; and of the *Carmen Seculare*, I cannot but ſuſpect that I might praiſe or cenſure it by caprice, without danger of detection; for who can be ſuppoſed to have laboured through it? Yet the time has been when this neglected work was ſo popular, that it was tranſlated into Latin by no common maſter.

His Poem on the battle of Ramillies is neceſſarily tedious by the form of the ſtanza: an uniform maſs of ten lines, thirty-five times repeated, inconſequential and ſlightly connected, muſt weary both the ear and the underſtanding.

His imitation of Spenſer, which conſiſts principally in *I ween* and *I weet*, without excluſion of later modes of ſpeech, makes his poem neither ancient nor modern. His mention of *Mars* and *Bellona*, and his compariſon of Marlborough to the Eagle that bears the thunder of *Jupiter*, are all puerile and unaffecting; and yet more deſpicable is the long tale told by *Lewis*, in his deſpair, of *Brute* and *Troynovant*, and the teeth of *Cadmus*, with his ſimilies of the raven and eagle, and wolf and lion. By the help of ſuch eaſy fictions, and vulgar topicks, without acquaintance with life, and without knowledge of art or nature, a poem of any length, cold and lifeleſs like this, may be eaſily written on any ſubject.

In his Epilogues to *Phædra* and to *Lucius*, he is very happily facetious; but in the Prologue before the Queen, the pedant has found his way, with Minerva, Perſeus, and Andromeda.

His Epigrams and lighter pieces are, like thoſe of others, ſometimes elegant, ſometimes trifling, and ſometimes dull; among the beſt are the *Camelion*, and the epitaph on *John* and *Joan*.

Scarcely

Scarcely any one of our poets has written ſo much, and tranſlated ſo little: the verſion of Callimachus is ſufficiently licentious; the paraphraſe on St. Paul's Exhortation to Charity is eminently beautiful.

Alma is written in profeſſed imitation of Hudibras, and has at leaſt one accidental reſemblance: Hudibras wants a plan, becauſe it is left imperfect; Alma is imperfect, becauſe it ſeems never to have had a plan. Prior appears not to have propoſed to himſelf any drift or deſign, but to have written the caſual dictates of the preſent moment.

What Horace ſaid when he imitated Lucilius might be ſaid of Butler by Prior, his numbers were not ſmooth or neat: Prior excelled him in verſification; but he was, like Horace, *inventore minor*; he had not Butler's exuberance of matter and variety of illuſtration. The ſpangles of wit which he could afford, he knew how to poliſh; but he wanted the bullion of his maſter. Butler pours out a negligent profuſion, certain of the weight, but careleſs of the ſtamp. Prior has comparatively little, but with that little he makes a fine ſhew. Alma has many admirers, and was the only piece among

Prior's works of which Pope ſaid that he ſhould wiſh to be the author.

Solomon is the work to which he entruſted the protection of his name, and which he expected ſucceeding ages to regard with veneration. His affection was natural; it had undoubtedly been written with great labour; and who is willihg to think that he has been labouring in vain? He had infuſed into it much knowledge and much thought; had often poliſhed it to elegance, often dignified it with ſplendour, and ſometimes heightened it to ſublimity: he perceived in it many excellences, and did not diſcover that it wanted that without which all others are of ſmall avail, the power of engaging attention and alluring curioſity.

Tedioufneſs is the moſt fatal of all faults; negligences or errors are ſingle and local, but tedioufneſs pervades the whole; other faults are cenſured and forgotten, but the power of tedioufneſs propagates itſelf. He that is weary the firſt hour is more weary the ſecond; as bodies forced into motion, contrary to their tendency, paſs more and more ſlowly through every ſucceſſive interval of ſpace.

Unhappily

Unhappily this pernicious failure is that which an author is leaſt able to diſcover. We are ſeldom tireſome to ourſelves; and the act of compoſition fills and delights the mind with change of language and ſucceſſion of images; every couplet when produced is new, and novelty is the great ſource of pleaſure. Perhaps no man ever thought a line ſuperfluous when he firſt wrote it, or contracted his work till his ebullitions of invention had ſubſided. And even if he ſhould controul his deſire of immediate renown, and keep his work *nine years* unpubliſhed, he will be ſtill the author, and ſtill in danger of deceiving himſelf: and if he conſults his friends, he will probably find men who have more kindneſs than judgement, or more fear to offend than deſire to inſtruct.

The tedioufneſs of this poem proceeds not from the uniformity of the ſubject, for it is ſufficiently diverſified, but from the continued tenour of the narration; in which Solomon relates the ſucceſſive viciſſitudes of his own mind, without the intervention of any other ſpeaker, or the mention of any other agent, unleſs it be Abra; the reader is only to learn what

what he thought, and to be told that he thought wrong. The event of every experiment is foreſeen, and therefore the proceſs is not much regarded.

Yet the work is far from deſerving to be neglected. He that ſhall peruſe it will be able to mark many paſſages, to which he may recur for inſtruction or delight; many from which the poet may learn to write, and the philoſopher to reaſon.

If Prior's poetry be generally conſidered, his praiſe will be that of correctneſs and induſtry, rather than of compaſs of comprehenſion, or activity of fancy. He never made any effort of invention: his greater pieces are only tiſſues of common thoughts; and his ſmaller, which conſiſt of light images or ſingle conceits, are not always his own. I have traced him among the French Epigrammatiſts, and have been informed that he poached for prey among obſcure authors. The *Thief and Cordelier* is, I ſuppoſe, generally conſidered as an original production; with how much juſtice this Epigram may tell, which was written by Georgius Sabinus, a poet now little known or read,

read, though once the friend of Luther and Melancthon:

De Sacerdote Furem conſolante.

Quidam ſacrificus furem camitatus euntem
Huc ubi dat ſontes carnificina neci,
Ne ſis mœſtus, ait; ſummi conviva Tonantis
Jam cum cœlitibus (ſi modo credis) eris.
Ille gemens, ſi vera mihi ſolatia præbes,
Hoſpes apud ſuperos ſis meus oro, refert.
Sacrificus contra; mihi non convivia fas eſt
Ducere, jejunans hac edo luce nihil.

What he has valuable he owes to his diligence and his judgement. His diligence has juſtly placed him amongſt the moſt correct of the Engliſh poets; and he was one of the firſt that reſolutely endeavoured at correctneſs. He never ſacrifices accuracy to haſte, nor indulges himſelf in contemptuous negligence, or impatient idleneſs; he has no careleſs lines, or entangled ſentiments; his words are nicely ſelected, and his thoughts fully expanded. If this part of his character ſuffers any abatement, it muſt be from the diſproportion of his rhymes, which have not always ſufficient conſonance, and from the admiſſion of broken lines into his *Solomon*; but perhaps he thought, like Cowley, that

that hemiſtichs ought to be admitted into heroic poetry.

He had apparently ſuch rectitude of judgement as ſecured him from every thing that approached to the ridiculous or abſurd; but as laws operate in civil agency not to the excitement of virtue, but the repreſſion of wickedneſs, ſo judgement in the operations of intellect can hinder faults, but not produce excellence. Prior is never low, nor very often ſublime. It is ſaid by Longinus of Euripides, that he forces himſelf ſometimes into grandeur by violence of effort, as the lion kindles his fury by the laſhes of his own tail. Whatever Prior obtains above mediocrity ſeems the effort of ſtruggle and of toil. He has many vigorous but few happy lines; he has every thing by purchaſe, and nothing by gift; he had no *nightly viſitations* of the Muſe, no infuſions of ſentiment or felicities of fancy.

His diction, however, is more his own than that of any among the ſucceſſors of Dryden; he borrows no lucky turns, or commodious modes of language from his predeceſſors. His phraſes are original, but they are ſometimes harſh; as he inherited no elegances, none has he

he bequeathed. His expreſſion has every mark of laborious ſtudy: the line ſeldom ſeems to have been formed at once; the words did not come till they were called, and were then put by conſtraint into their places, where they do their duty, but do it ſullenly. In his greater compoſitions there may be found more rigid ſtatelineſs than graceful dignity.

Of verſification he was not negligent: what he received from Dryden he did not loſe; neither did he increaſe the difficulty of writing by unneceſſary ſeverity, but uſes Triplets and Alexandrines without ſcruple. In his preface to *Solomon* he propoſes ſome improvements, by extending the ſenſe from one couplet to another, with variety of pauſes. This he has attempted; but without ſucceſs; his interrupted lines are unpleaſing, and his ſenſe as leſs diſtinct is leſs ſtriking.

He has altered the Stanza of Spenſer, as a houſe is altered by building another in its place of a different form. With how little reſemblance he has formed his new Stanza to that of his maſter, theſe ſpecimens will ſhew.

SPEN-

SPENSER.

She flying faſt from heaven's hated face,
And from the world that her diſcover'd wide,
Fled to the waſteful wilderneſs apace,
From living eyes her open ſhame to hide,
And lurk'd in rocks and caves long uneſpy'd.
But that fair crew of knights, and Una fair,
Did in that caſtle afterwards abide,
To reſt themſelves, and weary powers repair,
Where ſtore they found of all, that dainty was and rare.

PRIOR.

To the cloſe rock the frighted raven flies,
Soon as the riſing eagle cuts the air:
The ſhaggy wolf unſeen and trembling lies,
When the hoarſe roar proclaims the lion near.
"Ill-ſtarr'd did we our forts and lines forſake,
To dare our Britiſh foes to open fight:
Our conqueſt we by ſtratagem ſhould make:
Our triumph had been founded in our flight.
'Tis ours, by craft and by ſurpriſe to gain:
'Tis theirs, to meet in arms, and battle in the plain.

By this new ſtructure of his lines he has avoided difficulties; nor am I ſure that he has loſt

loſt any of the power of pleaſing; but he no longer imitates Spenſer.

Some of his poems are written without regularity of meaſures; for when he commenced poet, he had not recovered from our Pindarick infatuation: but he probably lived to be convinced, that the eſſence of verſe is order and conſonance.

His numbers are ſuch as mere diligence may attain; they ſeldom offend the ear, and ſeldom ſooth it; they commonly want airineſs, lightneſs, and facility: what is ſmooth, is not ſoft. His verſes always roll, but they ſeldom flow.

A ſurvey of the life and writings of Prior may exemplify a ſentence which he doubtleſs underſtood well, when he read Horace at his uncle's; "the veſſel long retains the ſcent "which it firſt receives." In his private relaxation he revived the tavern, and in his amorous pedantry he exhibited the college. But on higher occaſions and nobler ſubjects, when habit was overpowered by the neceſſity of reflection, he wanted not wiſdom as a ſtateſman, nor elegance as a poet.

CON-

CONGREVE.

WILLIAM CONGREVE deſcended from a family in Staffordſhire, of ſo great antiquity that it claims a place among the few that extend their line beyond the Norman Conqueſt; and was the ſon of William Congreve, ſecond ſon of Richard Congreve of Congreve and Stratton. He viſited, once at leaſt, the reſidence of his anceſtors; and, I believe, more places than one are ſtill ſhewn, in groves and gardens, where he is related to have written his *Old Batchelor*.

Neither the time nor place of his birth are certainly known; if the inſcription upon his monument be true, he was born in 1672. For the place; it was ſaid by himſelf, that he owed his

his nativity to England, and by every body elſe that he was born in Ireland. Southern mentioned him with ſharp cenſure, as a man that meanly diſowned his native country. The biographers aſſigned his nativity to Bardſa, near Leeds in Yorkſhire, from the account given by himſelf, as they ſuppoſe, to Jacob.

To doubt whether a man of eminence has told the truth about his own birth, is, in appearance, to be very deficient in candour; yet nobody can live long without knowing that falſehoods of convenience or vanity, falſehoods from which no evil immediately viſible enſues, except the general degradation of human teſtimony, are very lightly uttered, and once uttered, are ſullenly ſupported. Boileau, who deſired to be thought a rigorous and ſteady moraliſt, having told a petty lie to Lewis XIV. continued it afterwards by falſe dates; thinking himſelf obliged *in honour*, ſays his admirer, to maintain what, when he ſaid it, was ſo well received.

Wherever Congreve was born, he was educated firſt at Kilkenny, and afterwards at Dublin, his father having ſome military employment that ſtationed him in Ireland: but after

having paſſed through the uſual preparatory ſtudies, as may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, with great celerity and ſucceſs, his father thought it proper to aſſign him a profeſſion, by which ſomething proper might be gotten; and about the time of the Revolution ſent him, at the age of ſixteen, to ſtudy law in the Middle Temple, where he lived for ſeveral years, but with very little attention to Statutes or Reports.

His diſpoſition to become an author appeared very early, as he very early felt that force of imagination, and poſſeſſed that copiouſneſs of ſentiment, by which intellectual pleaſure can be given. His firſt performance was a novel, called *Incognita, or Love and Duty reconciled*: It is praiſed by the biographers, who quote ſome part of the preface, that is indeed, for ſuch a time of life, uncommonly judicious. I would rather praiſe it than read it.

His firſt dramatick labour was the *Old Batchelor*; of which he ſays, in his defence againſt Collier, "that comedy was written, as ſeveral "know, ſome years before it was acted. When "I wrote it, I had little thoughts of the ſtage; "but did it, to amuſe myſelf in a ſlow recovery "from

"from a fit of ſickneſs. Afterwards, through "my indiſcretion, it was ſeen, and in ſome "little time more it was acted; and I, through "the remainder of my indiſcretion, ſuffered "myſelf to be drawn in, to the proſecution of "a difficult and thankleſs ſtudy, and to be "involved in a perpetual war with knaves and "fools."

There ſeems to be a ſtrange affectation in authors of appearing to have done every thing by chance. The *Old Batchelor* was written for amuſement, in the languor of convaleſcence. Yet it is apparently compoſed with great elaborateneſs of dialogue, and inceſſant ambition of wit. The age of the writer conſidered, it is indeed a very wonderful performance; for, whenever written, it was acted (1693) when he was not more than twenty-one years old; and was then recommended by Mr. Dryden, Mr. Southern, and Mr. Maynwaring. Dryden ſaid that he never had ſeen ſuch a firſt play; but they found it deficient in ſome things requiſite to the ſucceſs of its exhibition, and by their greater experience fitted it for the ſtage. Southern uſed to relate of one comedy, probably of this, that when Congreve read it to

the players, he pronounced it ſo wretchedly, that they had almoſt rejected it; but they were afterwards ſo well perſuaded of its excellence, that, for half a year before it was acted, the manager allowed its author the privilege of the houſe.

Few plays have ever been ſo beneficial to the writer; for it procured him the patronage of Halifax, who immediately made him one of the commiſſioners for licenſing coaches, and ſoon after gave him a place in the pipe-office, and another in the cuſtoms of ſix hundred pounds a year. Congreve's converſation muſt ſurely have been at leaſt equally pleaſing with his writings.

Such a comedy, written at ſuch an age, requires ſome conſideration. As the lighter ſpecies of dramatick poetry profeſſes the imitation of common life, of real manners, and daily incidents, it apparently preſuppoſes a familiar knowledge of many characters, and exact obſervation of the paſſing world; the difficulty therefore is, to conceive how this knowledge can be obtained by a boy.

But if the *Old Batchelor* be more nearly examined, it will be found to be one of thoſe comedies

comedies which may be made by a mind vigorous and acute, and furniſhed with comick characters by the peruſal of other poets, without much actual commerce with mankind. The dialogue is one conſtant reciprocation of conceits, or claſh of wit, in which nothing flows neceſſarily from the occaſion, or is dictated by nature. The characters both of men and women are either fictitious and artificial, as thoſe of *Heartwell* and the Ladies; or eaſy and common, as *Wittol* a tame idiot, *Bluff* a ſwaggering coward, and *Fondlewife* a jealous puritan; and the cataſtrophe ariſes from a miſtake not very probably produced, by marrying a woman in a maſk.

Yet this gay comedy, when all theſe deductions are made, will ſtill remain the work of very powerful and fertile faculties: the dialogue is quick and ſparkling, the incidents ſuch, as ſeize the attention, and the wit ſo exuberant that it "o'er-informs its tenement."

Next year he gave another ſpecimen of his abilities in *The Double Dealer*, which was not received with equal kindneſs. He writes to his patron the lord Halifax a dedication, in which he endeavours to reconcile the reader to that

which found few friends among the audience. Theſe apologies are always uſeleſs: "de guſti-"bus non eſt diſputandum;" men may be convinced, but they cannot be pleaſed, againſt their will. But though taſte is obſtinate, it is very variable, and time often prevails when arguments have failed.

Queen Mary conferred upon both thoſe plays the honour of her preſence; and when ſhe died, ſoon after Congreve teſtified his gratitude by a deſpicable effuſion of elegiac paſtoral; a compoſition in which all is unnatural, and yet nothing is new.

In another year (1695) his prolifick pen produced *Love for Love*; a comedy of nearer alliance to life, and exhibiting more real manners, than either of the former. The character of *Foreſight* was then common. Dryden calculated nativities; both Cromwell and king William had their lucky days; and Shafteſbury himſelf, though he had no religion, was ſaid to regard predictions. The *Sailor* is not accounted very natural, but he is very pleaſant.

With this play was opened the new Theatre, under the direction of Betterton the tragedian; where he exhibited two years afterwards

(1697)

(1697) *The Mourning Bride*, a tragedy, ſo written as to ſhew him ſufficiently qualified for either kind of dramatick poetry.

In this play, of which, when he afterwards reviſed it, he reduced the verſification to greater regularity, there is more buſtle than ſentiment; the plot is buſy and intricate, and the events take hold on the attention; but, except a very few paſſages, we are rather amuſed with noiſe, and perplexed with ſtratagem, than entertained with any true delineation of natural characters. This, however, was received with more benevolence than any other of his works, and ſtill continues to be acted and applauded.

But whatever objections may be made either to his comic or tragic excellence, they are loſt at once in the blaze of admiration, when it is remembered that he had produced theſe four plays before he had paſſed his twenty-fifth year, before other men, even ſuch as are ſome time to ſhine in eminence, have paſſed their probation of literature, or preſume to hope for any other notice than ſuch as is beſtowed on diligence and enquiry. Among all the efforts of early genius which literary hiſtory records, I doubt whether any one can

be produced that more ſurpaſſes the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve.

About this time began the long-continued controverſy between Collier and the poets. In the reign of Charles the Firſt the Puritans had raiſed a violent clamour againſt the drama, which they conſidered as an entertainment not lawful to Chriſtians, an opinion held by them in common with the church of Rome; and Prynne publiſhed *Hiſtrio-maſtix*, a huge volume, in which ſtage plays were cenſured. The outrages and crimes of the Puritans brought afterwards their whole ſyſtem of doctrine into diſrepute, and from the Reſtoration the poets and players were left at quiet; for to have moleſted them would have had the appearance of tendency to puritanical malignity.

This danger, however, was worn away by time; and Collier, a fierce and implacable Nonjuror, knew that an attack upon the theatre would never make him ſuſpected for a puritan; he therefore (1698) publiſhed *A ſhort View of the Immorality and Profaneneſs of the Engliſh Stage*, I believe with no other motive than religious

ligious zeal and honeſt indignation. He was formed for a controvertiſt; with ſufficient learning; with diction vehement and pointed, though often vulgar and incorrect; with unconquerable pertinacity; with wit in the higheſt degree keen and ſarcaſtick; and with all thoſe powers exalted and invigorated by juſt confidence in his cauſe.

Thus qualified, and thus incited, he walked out to battle, and aſſailed at once moſt of the living writers, from Dryden to Durfey. His onſet was violent: thoſe paſſages, which while they ſtood ſingle had paſſed with little notice, when they were accumulated and expoſed togegether, excited horror; the wiſe and the pious caught the alarm, and the nation wondered why it had ſo long ſuffered irreligion and licentiouſneſs to be openly taught at the publick charge.

Nothing now remained for the poets but to reſiſt or fly. Dryden's conſcience or his prudence, angry as he was, withheld him from the conflict: Congreve and Vanbrugh attempted anſwers. Congreve, a very young man, elated with ſucceſs, and impatient of cenſure, aſſumed an air of confidence and ſecurity. His chief artifice

artifice of controverſy is to retort upon his adverſary his own words; he is very angry, and, hoping to conquer Collier with his own weapons, allows himſelf in the uſe of every term of contumely and contempt; but he has the ſword without the arm of Scanderbeg; he has his antagoniſt's coarſeneſs, but not his ſtrength. Collier replied; for conteſt was his delight, he was not to be frighted from his purpoſe or his prey.

The cauſe of Congreve was not tenable; whatever gloſſes he might uſe for the defence or palliation of ſingle paſſages, the general tenour and tendency of his plays muſt always be condemned. It is acknowledged, with univerſal conviction, that the peruſal of his works will make no man better; and that their ultimate effect is to repreſent pleaſure in alliance with vice, and to relax thoſe obligations by which life ought to be regulated.

The ſtage found other advocates, and the diſpute was protracted through ten years; but at laſt Comedy grew more modeſt; and Collier lived to ſee the reward of his labour in the reformation of the theatre.

Of

Of the powers by which this important victory was atchieved, a quotation from *Love for Love*, and the remark upon it, may afford a ſpecimen.

Sir Sampſ. "Sampſon's a very good name; "for your Sampſons were ſtrong dogs from the "beginning."

Angel. "Have a care—If you remember, "the ſtrongeſt Sampſon of your name pull'd "an old houſe over his head at laſt."

"Here you have the Sacred Hiſtory bur-"leſqued; and Sampſon once more brought "into the houſe of Dagon, to make ſport for "the Philiſtines!"

Congreve's laſt play was *The Way of the World*; which, though as he hints in his dedication it was written with great labour and much thought, was received with ſo little favour, that, being in a high degree offended and diſguſted, he reſolved to commit his quiet and his fame no more to the caprices of an audience.

From this time his life ceaſed to be publick; he lived for himſelf and for his friends; and among his friends was able to name every man of his time whom wit and elegance had raiſed

to

to reputation. It may be therefore reaſonably ſuppoſed that his manners were polite, and his converſation pleaſing.

He ſeems not to have taken much pleaſure in writing, as he contributed nothing to the *Spectator*, and only one paper to the *Tatler*, though publiſhed by men with whom he might be ſuppoſed willing to aſſociate; and though he lived many years after the publication of his Miſcellaneous Poems, yet he added nothing to them, but lived on in literary indolence; engaged in no controverſy, contending with no rival, neither ſoliciting flattery by publick commendations, nor provoking enmity by malignant criticiſm, but paſſing his time among the great and ſplendid, in the placid enjoyment of his fame and fortune.

Having owed his fortune to Halifax, he continued always of his patron's party, but, as it ſeems, without violence or acrimony; and his firmneſs was naturally eſteemed, as his abilities were reverenced. His ſecurity therefore was never violated; and when, upon the extruſion of the Whigs, ſome interceſſion was uſed leſt Congreve ſhould be diſplaced, the earl of Oxford made this anſwer:

"Non

" Non obtuſa adeo geſtamus pectora Pœni.
" Nec tam averſus equos Tyriâ ſol jungit ab urbe."

He that was thus honoured by the adverſe party, might naturally expect to be advanced when his friends returned to power, and he was accordingly made ſecretary for the iſland of Jamaica; a place, I ſuppoſe, without truſt or care, but which, with his poſt in the cuſtoms, is ſaid to have afforded him twelve hundred pounds a year.

His honours were yet far greater than his profits. Every writer mentioned him with reſpect; and, among other teſtimonies to his merit, Steele made him the patron of his Miſcellany, and Pope inſcribed to him his tranſlation of the Iliad.

But he treated the Muſes with ingratitude; for, having long converſed familiarly with the great, he wiſhed to be conſidered rather as a man of faſhion than of wit; and, when he received a viſit from Voltaire, diſguſted him by the deſpicable foppery of deſiring to be conſidered not as an author but a gentleman; to which the Frenchman replied, " that if he had " been only a gentleman, he ſhould not have " come to viſit him."

In

In his retirement he may be ſuppoſed to have applied himſelf to books: for he diſcovers more literature than the poets have commonly attained. But his ſtudies were in his latter days obſtructed by cataracts in his eyes, which at laſt terminated in blindneſs. This melancholy ſtate was aggravated by the gout, for which he ſought relief by a journey to Bath; but being overturned in his chariot, complained from that time of a pain in his ſide, and died, at his houſe in Surrey-ſtreet in the Strand, Jan. 29, 1728-9. Having lain in ſtate in the Jeruſalem-chamber, he was buried in Weſtminſter-abbey, where a monument is erected to his memory by Henrietta ducheſs of Marlborough, to whom, for reaſons either not known or not mentioned, he bequeathed a legacy of about ten thouſand pounds; the accumulation of attentive parſimony, which, though to her ſuperfluous and uſeleſs, might have given great aſſiſtance to the ancient family from which he deſcended, at that time by the imprudence of his relation reduced to difficulties and diſtreſs.

CON-

CONGREVE has merit of the higheſt kind; he is an original writer, who borrowed neither the models of his plot, nor the manner of his dialogue. Of his plays I cannot ſpeak diſtinctly; for ſince I inſpected them many years have paſſed; but what remains upon my memory is, that his characters are commonly fictitious and artificial, with very little of nature, and not much of life. He formed a peculiar idea of comick excellence, which he ſuppoſed to conſiſt in gay remarks and unexpected anſwers; but that which he endeavoured, he ſeldom failed of performing His ſcenes exhibit not much of humour, imagery, or paſſion: his perſonages are a kind of intellectual gladiators; every ſentence is to ward or ſtrike; the conteſt of ſmartneſs is never intermitted; his wit is a meteor playing to and fro with alternate coruſcations. His comedies have therefore, in ſome degree, the operation of tragedies; they ſurpriſe rather than divert, and raiſe admiration oftener than merriment. But they are the works of a mind replete with images, and quick in combination.

Of his miſcellaneous poetry, I cannot ſay any thing very favourable. The powers of

Congreve

Congreve ſeem to deſert him when he leaves the ſtage, as Antæus was no longer ſtrong than when he could touch the ground. It cannot be obſerved without wonder, that a mind ſo vigorous and fertile in dramatick compoſitions ſhould on any other occaſion diſcover nothing but impotence and poverty. He has in theſe little pieces neither elevation of fancy, ſelection of language, nor ſkill in verſification: yet, if I were required to ſelect from the whole maſs of Engliſh poetry the moſt poetical paragraph, I know not what I could pefer to an exclamation in *The Mourning Bride:*

ALMERIA.

It was a fancy'd noiſe; for all is huſh'd.

LEONORA.

It bore the accent of a human voice.

ALMERIA.

It was thy fear, or elſe ſome tranſient wind
Whiſtling thro' hollows of this vaulted iſle:
We'll liſten—

LEONORA.

Hark!

ALMERIA.

No, all is huſh'd, and ſtill as death.—'Tis dreadful!
How reverend is the face of this tall pile,

Whoſe

Whoſe ancient pillars rear their marble heads,
To bear aloft its arch'd and ponderous roof,
By its own weight made ſtedfaſt and immoveable,
Looking tranquillity! It ſtrikes an awe
And terror on my aching ſight; the tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And ſhoot a chilneſs to my trembling heart.
Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice;
Nay, quickly ſpeak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice—my own affrights me with its echoes.

He who reads theſe lines enjoys for a moment the powers of a poet; he feels what he remembers to have felt before; but he feels it with great increaſe of ſenſibility; he recognizes a familiar image, but meets it again amplified and expanded, embelliſhed with beauty, and enlarged with majeſty.

Yet could the author, who appears here to have enjoy'd the confidence of nature, lament the death of queen Mary in lines like theſe:

The rocks are cleft, and new-deſcending rills
Furrow the brows of all th' impending hills.
The water-gods to floods their rivulets turn,
And each, with ſtreaming eyes, ſupplies his wanting urn.

The Fauns forſake the woods, the Nymphs the grove,
And round the plain in ſad diſtractions rove:
In prickly brakes their tender limbs they tear,
And leave on thorns their locks of golden hair.
With their ſharp nails, themſelves the Satyrs wound,
And tug their ſhaggy beards, and bite with grief the ground.
Lo Pan himſelf, beneath a blaſted oak,
Dejected lies, his pipe in pieces broke.
See Pales weeping too, in wild deſpair,
And to the piercing winds her boſom bare.
And ſee yon fading myrtle, where appears
The Queen of Love, all bath'd in flowing tears;
See how ſhe wrings her hands, and beats her breaſt,
And tears her uſeleſs girdle from her waiſt:
Hear the ſad murmurs of her ſighing doves!
For grief they ſigh, forgetful of their loves.

And, many years after, he gave no proof that time had improved his wiſdom or his wit; for, on the death of the marquis of Blandford, this was his ſong;

And now the winds, which had ſo long been ſtill,
Began the ſwelling air with ſighs to fill;
The water-nymphs, who motionleſs remain'd,
Like images of ice, while ſhe complain'd,
Now loos'd their ſtreams: as when deſcending rains
Roll the ſteep torrents headlong o'er the plains.

The

The prone creation, who ſo long had gaz'd,
Charm'd with her cries, and at her griefs amaz'd,
Began to roar and howl with horrid yell,
Diſmal to hear, and terrible to tell!
Nothing but groans and ſighs were heard around,
And Echo multiplied each mournful ſound.

In both theſe funeral poems, when he has *yelled* out many *ſyllables* of ſenſeleſs *dolour*, he diſmiſſes his reader with ſenſeleſs conſolation: from the grave of Paſtora riſes a light that forms a ſtar; and where Amaryllis wept for Amyntas, from every tear ſprung up a violet.

But William is his hero, and of William he will ſing.

The hovering winds on downy wings ſhall wait around,
And catch, and waft to foreign lands, the flying ſound.

It cannot but be proper to ſhew what they ſhall have to catch and carry:

'Twas now, when flowery lawns the proſpect made,
And flowing brooks beneath a foreſt ſhade,
A lowing heifer, loveliеſt of the herd,
Stood feeding by; while two fierce bulls prepar'd
Their armed heads for fight; by fate of war to prove
The victor worthy of the fair-one's love.
Unthought preſage of what met next my view;
For ſoon the ſhady ſcene withdrew.

And now, for woods, and fields, and ſpringing flowers,
Behold a town ariſe, bulwark'd with walls and lofty towers;
Two rival armies all the plain o'erſpread,
Each in battalia rang'd, and ſhining arms array'd;
With eager eyes beholding both from far,
Namur, the prize and miſtreſs of the war.

The *Birth of The Muſe* is a miſerable fiction. One good line it has, which was borrowed from Dryden. The concluding verſes are theſe:

This ſaid, no more remain'd. Th' etherial hoſt
Again impatient crowd the cryſtal coaſt.
The father, now, within his ſpacious hands,
Encompaſs'd all the mingled maſs of ſeas and lands;
And, having heav'd aloft the ponderous ſphere,
He launch'd the world to float in ambient air.

Of his irregular poems, that to Mrs. Arabella Hunt ſeems to be the beſt: his ode for Cecilia's Day, however, has ſome lines which Pope had in his mind when he wrote his own.

His imitations of Horace are feebly paraphraſtical, and the additions which he makes are of little value. He ſometimes retains what were more properly omitted, as when he talks of *vervain* and *gums* to propitiate Venus.

Of

Of his tranſlations, the ſatire of Juvenal was written very early, and may therefore be forgiven, though it had not the maſſineſs and vigour of the original. In all his verſions ſtrength and ſpritelineſs are wanting: his Hymn to Venus, from Homer, is perhaps the beſt. His lines are weakened with expletives, and his rhymes are frequently imperfect.

His petty poems are ſeldom worth the coſt of criticiſm; ſometimes the thoughts are falſe, and ſometimes common. In his verſes on lady Gethin, the latter part is an imitation of Dryden's ode on Mrs. Killigrew; and Doris, that has been ſo laviſhly flattered by Steele, has indeed ſome lively ſtanzas, but the expreſſion might be mended; and the moſt ſtriking part of the character had been already ſhewn in *Love for Love*. His *Art of Pleaſing* is founded on a vulgar, but perhaps impracticable principle, and the ſtaleneſs of the ſenſe is not concealed by any novelty of illuſtration or elegance of diction.

This tiſſue of poetry, from which he ſeems to have hoped a laſting name, is totally neglected, and known only as it appended to his plays.

While comedy or while tragedy is regarded, his plays are likely to be read; but, except what relates to the ſtage, I know not that he has ever written a ſtanza that is ſung, or a couplet that is quoted. The general character of his Miſcellanies is, that they ſhew little wit, and little virtue.

Yet to him it muſt be confeſſed that we are indebted for the correction of a national error, and for the cure of our Pindarick madneſs. He firſt taught the Engliſh writers that Pindar's odes were regular: and though certainly he had not the fire requiſite for the higher ſpecies of lyrick poetry, he has ſhewn us that enthuſiaſm has its rules, and that in mere confuſion there is neither grace nor greatneſs.

BLACKMORE.

SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE is one of thoſe men whoſe writings have attracted much notice, but of whoſe life and manners very little has been communicated, and whoſe lot it has been to be much oftener mentioned by enemies than by friends.

He was the ſon of Robert Blackmore of Corſham in Wiltſhire, ſtyled by Wood *Gentleman*, and ſuppoſed to have been an attorney: having been for ſome time educated in a country-ſchool, he was ſent at thirteen to Weſtminſter; and in 1668 was entered at Edmund-Hall in Oxford, where he took the degree of M. A. June 3, 1676, and reſided thirteen years; a much longer time than it is uſual to ſpend at the univerſity; and which he ſeems to have

paſſed with very little attention to the buſineſs of the place; for, in his poems, the ancient names of nations or places, which he often introduces, are pronounced by chance. He afterwards travelled: at Padua he was made doctor of phyſick; and, after having wandered about a year and a half on the Continent, returned home.

In ſome part of his life, it is not known when, his indigence compelled him to teach a ſchool, an humiliation with which, though it certainly laſted but a little while, his enemies did not forget to reproach him, when he became conſpicuous enough to excite malevolence; and let it be remembered for his honour, that to have been once a ſchool-maſter is the only reproach which all the perſpicacity of malice, animated by wit, has ever fixed upon his private life.

When he firſt engaged in the ſtudy of phyſic, he enquired, as he ſays, of Dr. Sydenham what authors he ſhould read, and was directed by Sydenham, to Don Quixote; "which," ſaid he, "is a very good book; I read it ſtill." The perverſeneſs of mankind makes it often miſchievous in men of eminence to give way

to

to merriment, the idle and the illiterate will long ſhelter themſelves under this fooliſh apophthegm.

Whether he reſted ſatisfied with this direction, or ſought for better, he commenced phyſician, and obtained high eminence and extenſive practice. He became fellow of the College of Phyſicians, April 12, 1687, being one of the thirty which, by the new charter of king James, were added to the former Fellows. His reſidence was in Cheapſide *, and his friends were chiefly in the city. In the early part of Blackmore's time, a citizen was a term of reproach; and his place of abode was another topick to which his adverſaries had recourſe in the penury of ſcandal.

Blackmore, therefore, was made a poet not by neceſſity but inclination, and wrote not for a livelihood but for fame; or, if he may tell his own motives, for a nobler purpoſe, to engage poetry in the cauſe of Virtue.

I believe it is peculiar to him, that his firſt publick work was an heroick poem. He was not known as a maker of verſes, till he pub-

* At Sadler's Hall.

liſhed

liſhed (in 1695) *Prince Arthur*, in ten books, written, as he relates, "by ſuch catches and "ſtarts, and in ſuch occaſional uncertain hours "as his profeſſion afforded, and for the greateſt "part in coffee-houſes, or in paſſing up and "down the ſtreets." For the latter part of this apology he was accuſed of writing "to the "rumbling of his chariot-wheels." He had read, he ſays, "but little poetry throughout "his whole life; and for fifteen years be-"fore had not written an hundred verſes, ex-"cept one copy of Latin verſes in praiſe of "a friend's book."

He thinks, and with ſome reaſon, that from ſuch a performance perfection cannot be expected; but he finds another reaſon for the ſeverity of his cenſurers, which he expreſſes in language ſuch as Cheapſide eaſily furniſhed. "I am not free of the Poets Company, having "never kiſſed the governor's hands; mine is "therefore not ſo much as a permiſſion poem, "but a downright interloper. Thoſe gentle-"men who carry on their poetical trade in a "joint ſtock, would certainly do what they "could to ſink and ruin an unlicenſed adven-"turer, notwithſtanding I diſturbed none of "their

" their factories, nor imported any goods they " had ever dealt in." He had lived in the city till he had learned its note.

That *Prince Arthur* found many readers, is certain; for in two years it had three editions; a very uncommon inſtance of favourable reception, at a time when literary curioſity was yet confined to particular claſſes of the nation. Such ſucceſs naturally raiſed animoſity; and Dennis attacked it by a formal criticiſm, more tedious and diſguſting than the work which he condemns. To this cenſure may be oppoſed the approbation of Locke and the admiration of Molineux, which are found in their printed Letters. Molineux is particularly delighted with the ſong of *Mopas*, which is therefore ſubjoined to this narrative.

It is remarked by Pope, that what " raiſes " the hero often ſinks the man." Of Blackmore it may be ſaid, that as the poet ſinks, the man riſes; the animadverſions of Dennis, inſolent and contemptuous as they were, raiſed in him no implacable reſentment: he and his critick were afterwards friends; and in one of his latter works he praiſes Dennis as " equal

" to

" to Boileau in poetry, and ſuperior to him in " critical abilities.

He ſeems to have been more delighted with praiſe than pained by cenſure, and, inſtead of ſlackening, quickened his career. Having in two years produced ten books of *Prince Arthur*, in two years more (1697) he ſent into the world *King Arthur* in twelve. The provocation was now doubled, and the reſentment of wits and criticks may be ſuppoſed to have encreaſed in proportion. He found, however, advantages more than equivalent to all their outrages; he was this year made one of the phyſicians in ordinary to king William, and advanced by him to the honour of knighthood, with a preſent of a gold chain and medal.

The malignity of the wits attributed his knighthood to his new poem; but king William was not very ſtudious of poetry, and Blackmore perhaps had other merit: for he ſays, in his Dedication to *Alfred*, that " he " had a greater part in the ſucceſſion of the " houſe of Hanover that ever he had boaſted."

What Blackmore could contribute to the Succeſſion, or what he imagined himſelf to have contributed, cannot now be known.

That

That he had been of conſiderable uſe, I doub not but he believed, for I hold him to have been very honeſt; but he might eaſily make a falſe eſtimate of his own importance: thoſe whom their virtue reſtrains from deceiving others, are often diſpoſed by their vanity to deceive themſelves. Whether he promoted the Succeſſion or not, he at leaſt approved it, and adhered invariably to his principles and party through his whole life.

His ardour of poetry ſtill continued; and not long after (1700) he publiſhed a *Paraphraſe on the Book of Job*, and other parts of the ſcripture. This performance Dryden, who purſued him with great malignity, lived long enough to ridicule in a Prologue.

The wits eaſily confederated againſt him, as Dryden, whoſe favour they almoſt all courted, was his profeſſed adverſary. He had beſides given them reaſon for reſentment, as, in his Preface to *Prince Arthur*, he had ſaid of the Dramatick Writers almoſt all that was alleged afterwards by Collier; but Blackmore's cenſure was cold and general, Collier's was perſonal and ardent; Blackmore taught his reader to diſlike, what Collier incited him to abhor.

In

In his Preface to *King Arthur* he endeavoured to gain at leaſt one friend, and propitiated Congreve by higher praiſe of his *Mourning Bride* than it has obtained from any other critick.

The ſame year he publiſhed a *Satire on Wit*, a proclamation of defiance which united the poets almoſt all againſt him, and which brought upon him lampoons and ridicule from every ſide. This he doubtleſs foreſaw, and evidently deſpiſed; nor ſhould his dignity of mind be without its praiſe, had he not paid the homage to greatneſs which he denied to genius, and degraded himſelf by conferring that authority over the national taſte, which he takes from the poets, upon men of high rank and wide influence, but of leſs wit, and not greater virtue.

Here is again diſcovered the inhabitant of Cheapſide, whoſe head cannot keep his poetry unmingled with trade. To hinder that intellectual bankruptcy which he affects to fear, he will erect a *Bank for Wit*.

In this poem he juſtly cenſured Dryden's impurities, but praiſed his powers; though in a ſubſequent edition he retained the ſatire and

and omitted the praiſe. What was his reaſon I know not; Dryden was then no longer in his way.

His head ſtill teemed with heroic poetry, and (1705) he publiſhed *Eliza* in ten books. I am afraid that the world was now weary of contending about Blackmore's heroes; for I do not remember that by any author, ſerious or comical, I have found *Eliza* either praiſed or blamed. She "dropped," as it ſeems, "dead "born from the preſs." It is never mentioned, and was never ſeen by me till I borrowed it for the preſent occaſion. Jacob ſays, "it is "corrected, and reviſed for another impreſ- "ſion;" but the labour of reviſion was thrown away.

From this time he turned ſome of his thoughts to the celebration of living characters; and wrote a poem on the *Kit-cat Club*, and *Advice to the Poets how to celebrate the Duke of Marlborough*; but on occaſion of another year of ſucceſs, thinking himſelf qualified to give more inſtruction, he again wrote a poem of *Advice to a Weaver of Tapeſtry*. Steele was then publiſhing the *Tatler*; and looking round him for ſomething at which he might laugh, unluckily

luckily lighted on Sir Richard's work, and treated it with ſuch contempt, that, as Fenton obſerves, he put an end to the ſpecies of writers that gave *Advice to Painters*.

Not long after (1712) he publiſhed *Creation, a philoſophical Poem*, which has been, by my recommendation, inſerted in the late collection. Whoever judges of this by any other of Blackmore's performances, will do it injury. The praiſe given it by Addiſon (*Spec.* 339) is too well known to be tranſcribed; but ſome notice is due to the teſtimony of Dennis, who calls it a "philoſophical Poem, which has equalled "that of Lucretius in the beauty of its verſi-"fication, and infinitely ſurpaſſed it in the "ſolidity and ſtrength of its reaſoning."

Why an author ſurpaſſes himſelf, it is natural to enquire. I have heard from Mr. Draper, an eminent bookſeller, an account received by him from Ambroſe Philips, "That Black-"more, as he proceeded in this poem, laid his "manuſcript from time to time before a club "of wits with whom he aſſociated; and that "every man contributed, as he could, either "improvement or correction: ſo that," ſaid Philips, "there are perhaps no where in the

"book

" book thirty lines together that now ſtand as " they were originally written."

The relation of Philips, I ſuppoſe, was true; but when all reaſonable, all credible allowance is made for this friendly reviſion, the author will ſtill retain an ample dividend of praiſe; for to him muſt always be aſſigned the plan of the work, the diſtribution of its parts, the choice of topicks, the train of argument, and, what is yet more, the general predominance of philoſophical judgement and poetical ſpirit. Correction ſeldom effects more than the ſuppreſſion of faults: a happy line, or a ſingle elegance, may perhaps be added; but of a large work the general character muſt always remain; the original conſtitution can be very little helped by local remedies; inherent and radical dullneſs will never be much invigorated by extrinſick animation.

This poem, if he had written nothing elſe, would have tranſmitted him to poſterity among the firſt favourites of the Engliſh Muſe; but to make verſes was his tranſcendent pleaſure, and as he was not deterred by cenſure, he was not ſatiated with praiſe.

He deviated, however, ſometimes into other tracks of literature, and condeſcended to entertain his readers with plain proſe. When the *Spectator* ſtopped, he conſidered the polite world as deſtitute of entertainment; and in concert with Mr. Hughes, who wrote every third paper, publiſhed three times a week the *Lay Monaſtery*, founded on the ſuppoſition that ſome literary men, whoſe characters are deſcribed, had retired to a houſe in the country to enjoy philoſophical leiſure, and reſolved to inſtruct the public, by communicating their diſquiſitions and amuſements. Whether any real perſons were concealed under fictitious names, is not known. The hero of the club is one Mr. Johnſon; ſuch a conſtellation of excellence, that his character ſhall not be ſuppreſſed, though there is no great genius in the deſign, nor ſkill in the delineation.

"The firſt I ſhall name is Mr. Johnſon, a "gentleman that owes to nature excellent fa- "culties and an elevated genius, and to in- "duſtry and application many acquired ac- "compliſhments. His taſte is diſtinguiſhing, "juſt, and delicate; his judgement clear, and "his reaſon ſtrong, accompanied with an ima-

"gination

" gination full of ſpirit, of great compaſs, and
" ſtored with refined ideas. He is a critick of
" the firſt rank: and, what is his peculiar or-
" nament, he is delivered from the oſtentation,
" malevolence, and ſupercilious temper, that
" ſo often blemiſh men of that character. His
" remarks reſult from the nature and reaſon of
" things, and are formed by a judgement free,
" and unbiaſſed by the authority of thoſe who
" have lazily followed each other in the ſame
" beaten track of thinking, and are arrived
" only at the reputation of acute grammarians
" and commentators; men, who have been
" copying one another many hundred years,
" without any improvement; or, if they have
" ventured farther, have only applied in a me-
" chanical manner the rules of antient criticks
" to modern writings, and with great labour
" diſcovered nothing but their own want of
" judgement and capacity. As Mr. Johnſon
" penetrates to the bottom of his ſubject, by
" which means his obſervations are ſolid and
" natural, as well as delicate, ſo his deſign is
" always to bring to light ſomething uſeful and
" ornamental; whence his character is the re-
" verſe to theirs, who have eminent abilities

" in inſignificant knowledge, and a great feli-
" city in finding out trifles. He is no leſs in-
" duſtrious to ſearch out the merit of an au-
" thor, than ſagacious in diſcerning his errors
" and defects; and takes more pleaſure in com-
" mending the beauties than expoſing the ble-
" miſhes of a laudable writing: like Horace,
" in a long work, he can bear ſome deformi-
" ties, and juſtly lay them on the imperfection
" of human nature, which is incapable of
" faultleſs productions. When an excellent
" *Drama* appears in publick, and by its intrin-
" ſick worth attracts a general applauſe, he is
" not ſtung with envy and ſpleen; nor does he
" expreſs a ſavage nature, in faſtening upon
" the celebrated author, dwelling upon his
" imaginary defects, and paſſing over his con-
" ſpicuous excellences. He treats all writers
" upon the ſame impartial foot; and is not,
" like the little criticks, taken up entirely in
" finding out only the beauties of the ancient,
" and nothing but the errors of the modern
" writers. Never did any one expreſs more
" kindneſs and good-nature to young and unfi-
" niſhed authors; he promotes their intereſts,
" protects their reputation, extenuates their
" faults,

"faults, and ſets off their virtues, and by his "candour guards them from the ſeverity of "his judgement. He is not like thoſe dry "criticks, who are moroſe becauſe they cannot "write themſelves, but is himſelf maſter of a "good vein in poetry; and though he does "not often employ it, yet he has ſometimes "entertained his friends with his unpubliſhed "performances."

The reſt of the *Lay Monks* ſeem to be but feeble Mortals, in compariſon with the gigantic Johnſon; who yet, with all his abilities, and the help of the fraternity, could drive the publication but to forty papers, which were afterwards collected into a volume, and called in the title *A Sequel to the Spectators.*

Some years afterwards (1716 and 1717) he publiſhed two volumes of Eſſays in proſe, which can be commended only as they are written for the higheſt and nobleſt purpoſe, the promotion of religion. Blackmore's proſe is not the proſe of a poet; for it is languid, ſluggiſh, and lifeleſs; his diction is neither daring nor exact, his flow neither rapid nor eaſy, and his periods neither ſmooth nor ſtrong. His account of *Wit* will ſhew with

how little clearneſs he is content to think, and how little his thoughts are recommended by his language.

"As to its efficient cauſe, *Wit* owes its "production to an extraordinary and peculiar "temperament in the conſtitution of the poſ- "ſeſſor of it, in which is found a concurrence "of regular and exalted ferments, and an af- "fluence of animal ſpirits, refined and rectified "to a great degree of purity; whence, being "endowed with vivacity, brightneſs, and ce- "lerity, as well in their reflections as direct "motions, they become proper inſtruments "for the ſpritely operations of the mind; by "which means the imagination can with great "facility range the wide field of Nature, con- "template an infinite variety of objects, and, "by obſerving the ſimilitude and diſagreement "of their ſeveral qualities, ſingle out and ab- "ſtract, and then ſuit and unite thoſe ideas "which will beſt ſerve its purpoſe. Hence "beautiful alluſions, ſurpriſing metaphors, and "admirable ſentiments, are always ready at "hand: and while the fancy is full of images "collected from innumerable objects and their "different qualities, relations, and habitudes,

"it

" it can at pleaſure dreſs a common notion in " a ſtrange but becoming garb; by which, as " before obſerved, the ſame thought will ap- " pear a new one, to the great delight and " wonder of the hearer. What we call *genius* " reſults from this particular happy complexion " in the firſt formation of the perſon that en- " joys it, and is Nature's gift, but diverſified " by various ſpecifick characters and limita- " tions, as its active fire is blended and allayed " by different proportions of phlegm, or re- " duced and regulated by the contraſt of oppo- " ſite ferments. Therefore, as there happens " in the compoſition of facetious genius a " greater or leſs, though ſtill an inferior, de- " gree of judgement and prudence, one man " of wit will be varied and diſtinguiſhed from " another."

In theſe Eſſays he took little care to propitiate the wits; for he ſcorns to avert their malice at the expence of virtue or of truth.

" Several, in their books, have many ſarcaſ- " tical and ſpiteful ſtrokes at religion in ge- " neral; while others make themſelves pleaſant " with the principles of the Chriſtian. Of

" the laſt kind, this age has ſeen a moſt auda-
" cious example in the book intitled *A Tale*
" *of a Tub*. Had this writing been publiſhed
" in a pagan or popiſh nation, who are juſtly
" impatient of all indignity offered to the eſtab-
" liſhed religion of their country, no doubt but
" the author would have received the puniſh-
" ment he deſerved. But the fate of this im-
" pious buffoon is very different; for in a pro-
" teſtant kingdom, zealous of their civil and
" religious immunities, he has not only eſcaped
" affronts and the effects of public reſentment,
" but has been careſſed and patronized by per-
" ſons of great figure, and of all denominations.
" Violent party-men, who differed in all things
" beſides, agreed in their turn to ſhew particu-
" lar reſpect and friendſhip to this inſolent
" derider of the worſhip of his country, till at
" laſt the reputed writer is not only gone off
" with impunity, but triumphs in his dignity
" and preferment. I do not know that any in-
" quiry or ſearch was ever made after this writing,
" or that any reward was ever offered for the
" diſcovery of the author, or that the in-
" famous book was ever condemned to be
" burnt in publick: whether this proceeds

" from

" from the exceſſive eſteem and love that men " in power, during the late reign, had for wit, " or their defect of zeal and concern for the " Chriſtian religion, will be determined beſt " by thoſe who are beſt acquainted with their " character."

In another place he ſpeaks with becoming abhorrence of a *godleſs author* who has burleſqued a Pſalm. This author was ſuppoſed to be Pope, who publiſhed a reward for any one that would produce the coiner of the accuſation, but never denied it; and was afterwards the perpetual and inceſſant enemy of Blackmore.

One of his Eſſays is upon the Spleen, which is treated by him ſo much to his own ſatisfaction, that he has publiſhed the ſame thoughts in the ſame words; firſt in the *Lay Monaſtery*; then in the Eſſay; and then in the Preface to a Medical Treatiſe on the Spleen. One paſſage, which I have found already twice, I will here exhibit, becauſe I think it better imagined, and better expreſſed, than could be expected from the common tenour of his proſe:

" —As

" —As the ſeveral combinations of ſplenetic " madneſs and folly produce an infinite variety " of irregular underſtanding, ſo the amicable " accommodation and alliance between ſeveral " virtues and vices produce an equal diverſity " in the diſpoſitions and manners of mankind; " whence it comes to paſs, that as many mon- " ſtrous and abſurd productions are found in " the moral as in the intellectual world. How " ſurpriſing is it to obſerve among the leaſt " culpable men, ſome whoſe minds are at- " tracted by heaven and earth, with a ſeeming " equal force; ſome who are proud of humi- " lity; others who are cenſorious and unchari- " table, yet ſelf-denying and devout; ſome " who join contempt of the world with ſordid " avarice; and others, who preſerve a great " degree of piety, with ill-nature and ungo- " verned paſſions; nor are inſtances of this in- " conſiſtent mixture leſs frequent among bad " men, where we often, with admiration, ſee " perſons at once generous and unjuſt, impious " lovers of their country, and flagitious heroes, " good-natured ſharpers, immoral men of ho- " nour, and libertines who will ſooner die than " change their religion; and though it is true

" that

" that repugnant coalitions of ſo high a degree " are found but in a part of mankind, yet none " of the whole maſs, either good or bad, are " intirely exempted from ſome abſurd mix- " ture."

He about this time (Aug. 22, 1716) became " one of the *Elects* of the College of Phyſi- " cians; and was ſoon after (Oct. 1.) choſen *Cenſor*. He ſeems to have arrived late, what- ever was the reaſon, at his medical honours.

Having ſucceeded ſo well in his book on *Creation*, by which he eſtabliſhed the great prin- ciple of all Religion, he thought his undertak- ing imperfect, unleſs he likewiſe enforced the truth of Revelation; and for that purpoſe added another poem on *Redemption*. He had likewiſe written, before his *Creation*, three books on the *Nature of man*.

The lovers of muſical devotion have always wiſhed for a more happy metrical verſion than they have yet obtained of the book of Pſalms; this wiſh the piety of Blackmore led him to gratify; and he produced (1721) *a new Verſion of the* Pſalms *of* David, *fitted to the Tunes uſed in Churches*; which, being recommended by the archbiſhops and many biſhops, obtained a li- cence

cence for its admiſſion into publick worſhip; but no admiſſion has it yet obtained, nor has it any right to come where Brady and Tate have got poſſeſſion. Blackmore's name muſt be added to thoſe of many others, who, by the ſame attempt, have obtained only the praiſe of meaning well.

He was not yet deterred from heroick poetry; there was another monarch of this iſland, for he did not fetch his heroes from foreign countries, whom he conſidered as worthy of the Epic muſe, and he dignified Alfred (1723) with twelve books. But the opinion of the nation was now ſettled; a hero introduced by Blackmore was not likely to find either reſpect or kindneſs; *Alfred* took his place by *Eliza* in ſilence and darkneſs: benevolence was aſhamed to favour, and malice was weary of inſulting. Of his four Epic Poems, the firſt had ſuch reputation and popularity as enraged the criticks; the ſecond was at leaſt known enough to be ridiculed; the two laſt had neither friends nor enemies.

Contempt is a kind of gangrene, which if it ſeizes one part of a character corrupts all the reſt by degrees. Blackmore, being deſpiſed as a poet,

a poet, was in time neglected as a phyſician; his practice, which was once invidiouſly great, forſook him in the latter part of his life; but being by nature, or by principle, averſe from idleneſs, he employed his unwelcome leiſure in writing books on phyſick, and teaching others to cure thoſe whom he could himſelf cure no longer. I know not whether I can enumerate all the treatiſes by which he has endeavoured to diffuſe the heart of healing; for there is ſcarcely any diſtemper, of dreadful name, which he has not taught the reader how to oppoſe. He has written on the ſmall-pox, with a vehement invective againſt inoculation; on conſumptions, the ſpleen, the gout, the rheumatiſm, the king's-evil, the dropſy, the jaundice, the ſtone, the diabetes, and the plague.

Of thoſe books, if I had read them, it could not be expected that I ſhould be able to give a critical account. I have been told that there is ſomething in them of vexation and diſcontent, diſcovered by a perpetual attempt to degrade phyſick from its ſublimity, and to repreſent it as attainable without much previous or concomitant learning. By the tranſient glances which I have

I have thrown upon them, I have obſerved an affected contempt of the Ancients, and a ſupercilious deriſion of tranſmitted knowledge. Of this indecent arrogance the following quotation from his preface to the Treatiſe on the Small-pox will afford a ſpecimen; in which, when the reader finds, what I fear is true, that when he was cenſuring Hippocrates he did not know the difference between *aphoriſm* and *apophthegm*, he will not pay much regard to his determinations concerning ancient learning.

"As for this book of Aphoriſms, it is like "my lord Bacon's of the ſame title, a book of "jeſts, or a grave collection of trite and trifling "obſervations; of which though many are true "and certain, yet they ſignify nothing, and "may afford diverſion, but no inſtruction; moſt "of them being much inferior to the ſayings "of the wiſe men of Greece, which yet are ſo "low and mean, that we are entertained every "day with more valuable ſentiments at the "table-converſation of ingenious and learned "men."

I am unwilling, however, to leave him in total diſgrace, and will therefore quote from another Preface a paſſage leſs reprehenſible.

"Some

" Some gentlemen have been diſingenuous " and unjuſt to me, by wreſting and forcing " my meaning in the Preface to another book, " as if I condemned and expoſed all learning, " though they knew I declared that I greatly " honoured and eſteemed all men of ſuperior " literature and erudition; and that I only un- " dervalued falſe or ſuperficial learning, that " ſignifies nothing for the ſervice of mankind; " and that, as to phyſick, I expreſſly affirmed " that learning muſt be joined with native " genius to make a phyſician of the firſt rank; " but if thoſe talents are ſeparated, I aſſerted, " and do ſtill inſiſt, that a man of native " ſagacity and diligence will prove a more able " and uſeful practiſer, than a heavy notional " ſcholar, encumbered with a heap of confuſed " ideas."

He was not only a poet and a phyſician, but produced likewiſe a work of a different kind, *A true and impartial Hiſtory of the Conſpiracy againſt King* William *of glorious Memory, in the Year* 1695. This I have never ſeen, but ſuppoſe it at leaſt compiled with integrity. He engaged likewiſe in theological controverſy, and wrote two books againſt the Arians; *Juſt Prejudices*

Prejudices againſt the Arian *Hypotheſis*; and *Modern* Arians *unmaſked.* Another of his works is *Natural Theology or Moral Duties conſidered apart from Poſitive; with ſome Obſervations on the Deſirableneſs and Neceſſity of a ſupernatural Revelation.* This was the laſt book that he publiſhed. He left behind him *The accompliſhed Preacher, or an Eſſay upon Divine Eloquence*; which was printed after his death by Mr. White of Nayland in Eſſex, the miniſter who attended his death-bed, and teſtified the fervent piety of of his laſt hours. He died on the eighth of October, 1729.

BLACKMORE, by the unremitted enmity of the wits, whom he provoked more by his virtue than his dullneſs, has been expoſed to worſe treatment than he deſerved; his name was ſo long uſed to point every epigram upon dull writers, that it became at laſt a bye-word of contempt; but it deſerves obſervation, that malignity takes hold only of his writings, and that his life paſſed without reproach, even when his boldneſs of reprehenſion naturally turned upon him many eyes deſirous to eſpy faults, which many tongues would have made haſte to publiſh.

publiſh. But thoſe who could not blame, could at leaſt forbear to praiſe, and therefore of his private life and domeſtick character there are no memorials.

As an author he may juſtly claim the honours of magnanimity. The inceſſant attacks of his enemies, whether ſerious or merry, are never diſcovered to have diſturbed his quiet, or to have leſſened his confidence in himſelf: they neither awaked him to ſilence nor to caution; they neither provoked him to petulance, nor depreſſed him to complaint. While the diſtributors of literary fame were endeavouring to depreciate and degrade him, he either deſpiſed or defied them, wrote on as he had written before, and never turned aſide to quiet them by civility, or repreſs them by confutation.

He depended with great ſecurity on his own powers, and perhaps was for that reaſon leſs diligent in peruſing books. His literature was, I think, but ſmall. What he knew of antiquity, I ſuſpect him to have gathered from modern compilers: but, though he could not boaſt of much critical knowledge, his mind was ſtored with general principles, and he left mi-

nute reſearches to thoſe whom he conſidered as little minds.

With this diſpoſition he wrote moſt of his poems. Having formed a magnificent deſign, he was careleſs of particular and ſubordinate elegances; he ſtudied no niceties of verſification; he waited for no felicities of fancy; but caught his firſt thoughts in his firſt words in which they were preſented: nor does it appear that he ſaw beyond his own performances, or had ever elevated his ideas to that ideal perfection which every genius born to excel is condemned always to purſue, and never overtake. In the firſt ſuggeſtions of his imagination he acquieſced; he thought them good, and did not ſeek for better. His works may be read a long time without the occurrence of a ſingle line that ſtands prominent from the reſt.

The poem on *Creation* has, however, the appearance of more circumſpection; it wants neither harmony of numbers, accuracy of thought, nor elegance of diction: it has either been written with great care, or, what cannot be imagined of ſo long a work, with ſuch felicity as made care leſs neceſſary.

Its

Its two conſtituent parts are ratiocination and deſcription. To reaſon in verſe, is allowed to be difficult; but Blackmore not only reaſons in verſe, but very often reaſons poetically: and finds the art of uniting ornament with ſtrength, and eaſe with cloſeneſs. This is a ſkill which Pope might have condeſcended to learn from him, when he needed it ſo much in his Moral Eſſays.

In his deſcriptions both of life and nature, the poet and the philoſopher happily co-operate; truth is recommended by elegance, and elegance ſuſtained by truth.

In the ſtructure and order of the poem, not only the greater parts are properly conſecutive, but the didactick and illuſtrative paragraphs are ſo happily mingled, that labour is relieved by pleaſure, and the attention is led on through a long ſucceſſion of varied excellence to the original poſition, the fundamental principle of wiſdom and of virtue.

As the heroick poems of Blackmore are now little read, it is thought proper to inſert, as a ſpecimen from *Prince Arthur*, the ſong of *Mopas* mentioned by Molineux.

But that which Arthur with moſt pleaſure heard,
Were noble ſtrains, by Mopas ſung the bard,
Who to his harp in lofty verſe began,
And through the ſecret maze of nature ran.
He the great Spirit ſung, that all things fill'd,
That the tumultuous waves of Chaos ſtill'd;
Whoſe nod diſpos'd the jarring ſeeds to peace,
And made the wars of hoſtile Atoms ceaſe.
All Beings, we in fruitful Nature find,
Proceeded from the great Eternal Mind;
Streams of his unexhauſted ſpring of power,
And cheriſh'd with his influence, endure.
He ſpread the pure cerulean fields on high,
And arch'd the chambers of the vaulted ſky,
Which he, to ſuit their glory with their height,
Adorn'd with globes, that reel, as drunk with light.
His hand directed all the tuneful ſpheres,
He turn'd their orbs, and poliſh'd all the ſtars.
He fill'd the Sun's vaſt lamp with golden light,
And bid the ſilver Moon adorn the night.
He ſpread the airy Ocean without ſhores,
Where birds are wafted with their feather'd oars.
Then ſung the bard how the light vapours riſe
From the warm earth, and cloud the ſmiling ſkies.
He ſung how ſome, chill'd in their airy flight,
Fall ſcatter'd down in pearly dew by night;
How ſome, rais'd higher, ſit in ſecret ſteams
On the reflected points of bounding beams.

Till,

Till, chill'd with cold, they ſhade th' etherial plain,
Then on the thirſty earth deſcend in rain;
How ſome, whoſe parts a ſlight contexture ſhow,
Sink hovering through the air, in fleecy ſnow;
How part is ſpun in ſilken threads, and clings
Entangled in the graſs in glewy ſtrings;
How others ſtamp to ſtones, with ruſhing ſound
Fall from their cryſtal quarries to the ground;
How ſome are laid in trains, that kindled fly
In harmleſs fires by night, about the ſky;
How ſome in winds blow with impetuous force,
And carry ruin where they bend their courſe,
While ſome conſpire to form a gentle breeze,
To fan the air, and play among the trees;
How ſome, enrag'd, grow turbulent and loud,
Pent in the bowels of a frowning cloud;
That cracks, as if the axis of the world
Was broke, and heaven's bright towers were downwards hurl'd.

He ſung how earth's wide ball, at Jove's command,
Did in the midſt on airy columns ſtand;
And how the ſoul of plants, in priſon held,
And bound with ſluggiſh fetters, lies conceal'd,
Till with the ſpring's warm beams, almoſt releas'd
From the dull weight, with which it lay oppreſt,
Its vigour ſpreads, and makes the teeming earth
Heave up, and labour with the ſprouting birth:

The active ſpirit freedom ſeeks in vain,
It only works and twiſts a ſtronger chain.
Urging its priſon's ſides to break a way,
It makes that wider, where 'tis forc'd to ſtay,
Till, having form'd its living houſe, it rears
Its head, and in a tender plant appears.
Hence ſprings the oak, the beauty of the grove,
Whoſe ſtately trunk fierce ſtorms can ſcarcely move.
Hence grows the cedar, hence the ſwelling vine
Does round the elm its purple cluſters twine.
Hence painted flowers the ſmiling gardens bleſs,
Both with their fragrant ſcent and gaudy dreſs.
Hence the white lily in full beauty grows,
Hence the blue violet, and bluſhing roſe.
He ſung how ſun-beams brood upon the earth,
And in the glebe hatch ſuch a numerous birth;
Which way the genial warmth in Summer ſtorms
Turns putrid vapours to a bed of worms;
How rain, transform'd by this prolifick power,
Falls from the clouds an animated ſhower.
He ſung the embryo's growth within the womb,
And how the parts their various ſhapes aſſume.
With what rare art the wonderous ſtructure's wrought,
From one crude maſs to ſuch perfection brought;
That no part uſeleſs, none miſplac'd we ſee,
None are forgot, and more would monſtrous be."

FENTON.

FENTON.

THE brevity with which I am to write the account of ELIJAH FENTON is not the effect of indifference or negligence. I have ſought intelligence among his relations in his native country, but have not obtained it. He was born near Newcaſtle in Staffordſhire, of an ancient family, whoſe eſtate was very conſiderable; but he was the youngeſt of twelve children, and being therefore neceſſarily deſtined to ſome lucrative employment, was ſent firſt to ſchool, and afterwards to Cambridge *, but, with many other wiſe and virtuous men, who at that time of diſcord and debate conſulted

* He was entered of Jeſus College, and took a Bachelor's degree in 1704. H.

conſcience, whether well or ill informed, more than intereſt, he doubted the legality of the government, and, refuſing to qualify himſelf for publick employment by the oaths required, left the univerſity without a degree; but I never heard that the enthuſiaſm of oppoſition impelled him to ſeparation from the church.

By this perverſeneſs of integrity he was driven out a commoner of Nature, excluded from the regular modes of profit and proſperity, and reduced to pick up a livelihood uncertain and fortuitous; but it muſt be remembered that he kept his name unſullied, and never ſuffered himſelf to be reduced, like too many of the ſame ſect, to mean arts and diſhonourable ſhifts. Whoever mentioned Fenton, mentioned him with honour.

The life that paſſes in penury, muſt neceſſarily paſs in obſcurity. It is impoſſible to trace Fenton from year to year, or to diſcover what means he uſed for his ſupport. He was a while ſecretary to Charles earl of Orrery in Flanders, and tutor to his young ſon, who afterwards mentioned him with great eſteem and tenderneſs. He was at one time aſſiſtant in the ſchool of Mr. Bonwicke in Surrey; and at another

ther kept a ſchool for himſelf at Sevenoaks in Kent, which he brought into reputation; but was perſuaded to leave it (1710) by Mr. St. John, with promiſes of a more honourable employment.

His opinions, as he was a Nonjuror, ſeem not to have been remarkably rigid. He wrote with great zeal and affection the praiſes of queen Anne, and very willingly and liberally extolled the duke of Marlborough, when he was (1707) at the height of his glory.

He expreſſed ſtill more attention to Marlborough and his family by an elegiac Paſtoral on the marquis of Blandford, which could be prompted only by reſpect or kindneſs; for neither the duke nor dutcheſs deſired the praiſe, or liked the coſt of patronage.

The elegance of his poetry entitled him to the company of the wits of his time, and the amiableneſs of his manners made him loved wherever he was known. Of his friendſhip to Southern and Pope there are laſting monuments.

He publiſhed in 1707 a collection of poems.

By Pope he was once placed in a ſtation that might have been of great advantage. Craggs, when

when he was advanced to be ſecretary of ſtate (about 1720), feeling his own want of literature, deſired Pope to procure him an inſtructor, by whoſe help he might ſupply the deficiencies of his education. Pope recommended Fenton, in whom Craggs found all that he was ſeeking. There was now a proſpect of eaſe and plenty for Fenton had merit, and Craggs had generoſity: but the ſmall-pox ſuddenly put an end to the pleaſing expectation.

When Pope, after the great ſucceſs of his *Iliad*, undertook the *Odyſſey*, being, as it ſeems, weary of tranſlating, he determined to engage auxiliaries. Twelve books he took to himſelf, and twelve he diſtributed between Broome and Fenton: the books allotted to Fenton were the firſt, the fourth, the nineteenth, and the twentieth. It is obſervable, that he did not take the eleventh, which he had before tranſlated into blank verſe; neither did Pope claim it, but committed it to Broome. How the two aſſociates performed their parts is well known to the readers of poetry, who have never been able to diſtinguiſh their books from thoſe of Pope.

In

In 1723 was performed his tragedy of *Mariamne*; to which Southern, at whoſe houſe it was written, is ſaid to have contributed ſuch hints as his theatrical experience ſupplied. When it was ſhewn to Cibber, it was rejected by him, with the additional inſolence of adviſing Fenton to engage himſelf in ſome employment of honeſt labour, by which he might obtain that ſupport which he could never hope from his poetry. The play was acted at the other theatre; and the brutal petulance of Cibber was confuted, though, perhaps, not ſhamed, by general applauſe. Fenton's profits are ſaid to have amounted to near a thouſand pounds, with which he diſcharged a debt contracted by his attendance at court.

Fenton ſeems to have had ſome peculiar ſyſtem of verſification. *Mariamne* is written in lines of ten ſyllables, with few of thoſe redundant terminations which the drama not only admits but requires, as more nearly approaching to real dialogue. The tenor of his verſe is ſo uniform that it cannot be thought caſual; and yet upon what principle he ſo conſtructed it, is difficult to diſcover.

The

The mention of his play brings to my mind a very trifling occurrence. Fenton was one day in the company of Broome his aſſociate, and Ford, a clergyman, at that time too well known, whoſe abilities, inſtead of furniſhing convivial merriment to the voluptuous and diſſolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the wiſe. They determined all to ſee the *Merry Wives of Windſor*, which was acted that night; and Fenton, as a dramatick poet, took them to the ſtage-door; where the door-keeper enquiring who they were, was told that they were three very neceſſary men, Ford, Broome, and Fenton. The name in the play, which Pope reſtored to *Brook*, was then *Broome*.

It was perhaps after this play that he undertook to reviſe the punctuation of Milton's Poems, which, as the author neither wrote the original copy nor corrected the preſs, was ſuppoſed capable of amendment, To this edition he prefixed a ſhort and elegant account of Milton's life, written at once with tenderneſs and integrity.

He publiſhed likewiſe (1729) a very ſplendid edition of Waller, with notes often uſeful, often

often entertaining, but too much extended by long quotations from Clarendon. Illuſtrations drawn from a book ſo eaſily conſulted, ſhould be made by reference rather than tranſcription.

The latter part of his life was calm and pleaſant. The relict of Sir William Trumbull invited him, by Pope's recommendation, to educate her ſon; whom he firſt inſtructed at home, and then attended to Cambridge. The lady afterwards detained him with her as the auditor of her accounts. He often wandered to London, and amuſed himſelf with the converſation of his friends.

He died in 1730, at Eaſthampſtead in Berkſhire, the ſeat of the lady Trumbull; and Pope, who had been always his friend, honoured him with an epitaph, of which he borrowed the two firſt lines from Craſhaw.

Fenton was tall and bulky, inclined to corpulence, which he did not leſſen by much exerciſe; for he was very ſluggiſh and ſedentary, roſe late, and when he had riſen ſat down to his book or papers. A woman that once waited on him in a lodging, told him, as ſh ſaid, that he would "lie a-bed, and be fed "with a ſpoon." This, however, was not the

the worſt that might have been prognoſticated; for Pope ſays, in his Letters, that "he died "of indolence;" but his immediate diſtemper was the gout.

Of his morals and his converſation the account is uniform: he was never named but with praiſe and fondneſs as a man in the higheſt degree amiable and excellent. Such was the character given him by the earl of Orrery, his pupil; ſuch is the teſtimony of Pope *; and ſuch were the ſuffrages of all who could boaſt of his acquaintance.

By a former writer of his Life a ſtory is told, which ought not to be forgotten. He uſed, in the latter part of his time, to pay his relations in the country a yearly viſit. At an entertainment made for the family by his elder brother, he obſerved, that one of his ſiſters, who had married unfortunately, was abſent; and found, upon enquiry, that diſtreſs had made her thought unworthy of invitation. As ſhe was at no great diſtance, he refuſed to ſit at the table till ſhe was called, and, when ſhe had taken her place, was careful to ſhew her particular attention.

* Spence.

His

His collection of poems is now to be conſidered. The ode to the *Sun* is written upon a common plan, without uncommon ſentiments; but its greateſt fault is its length. No poem ſhould be long of which the purpoſe is only to ſtrike the fancy, without enlightening the underſtanding by precept, ratiocination, or narrative. A blaze firſt pleaſes, and then tires the ſight.

Of *Florelio* it is ſufficient to ſay, that it is an occaſional paſtoral, which implies ſomething neither natural nor artificial, neither comick nor ſerious.

The next ode is irregular, and therefore defective. As the ſentiments are pious, they cannot eaſily be new; for what can be added to topicks on which ſucceſſive ages have been employed!

Of the *Paraphraſe on Iſaiah* nothing very favourable can be ſaid. Sublime and ſolemn proſe gains little by a change to blank verſe; and the paraphraſt has deſerted his original, by admitting images not Aſiatick, at leaſt not Judaical:

——Returning Peace,
Dove-eyed, and rob'd in white—

Of

Of his petty poems ſome are very trifling, without any thing to be praiſed either in the thought or expreſſion. He is unlucky in his competition; he tells the ſame idle tale with Congreve, and does not tell it ſo well. He tranſlates from Ovid the ſame epiſtle as Pope; but I am afraid not with equal happineſs.

To examine his performances one by one would be tedious. His tranſlation from Homer into blank verſe will find few readers while another can be had in rhyme. The piece addreſſed to Lambarde is no diſagreeable ſpecimen of epiſtolary poetry; and his ode to the lord Gower was pronounced by Pope the next ode in the Engliſh language to Dryden's Cecilia. Fenton may be juſtly ſtyled an excellent verſifier and a good poet.

WHATEVER I have ſaid of Fenton is confirmed by Pope in a letter, by which he communicated to Broome an account of his death.

TO

The Revd Mr. BROOME

At PULHAM, near HARLESTON.

NOR

SUFFOLKE

By BECCLES Bag.

DR Sir.

I Intended to write to you on this melancholy ſubject, the death of Mr. Fenton, before yrs came; but ſtayed to have informed myſelf and you of ye circumſtances of it. All I hear is, that he felt a gradual Decay, tho ſo early in Life, and was declining for 5 or 6 months. It was not, as I apprehended, the Gout in his Stomach, but I believe rather a Complication firſt of Groſs humours, as he was naturally corpulent, not diſcharging themſelves, as he uſed no ſort of Exerciſe. No man better bore ye approaches of his Diſſolution (as I am told)

told) or with leſs oſtentation yielded up his Being. The great Modeſty wch you know was natural to him, and ye great Contempt he had for all ſorts of Vanity and Parade, never appeared more than in his laſt moments: He had a conſcious Satisfaction (no doubt) in acting right, in feeling himſelf honeſt, true, & un-pretending to more than was his own. So he dyed, as he lived with that ſecret, yet ſufficient, Contentment.

As to any Papers left behind him, I dare ſay they can be but few; for this reaſon, He never wrote out of Vanity, or thought much of the Applauſe of men. I know an Inſtance where he did his utmoſt to conceal his own merit that way; and if we join to this his natural Love of Eaſe I fancy we muſt expect little of this ſort: at leaſt I hear of none except ſome few further remarks on Waller (wch his cautious integrity made him leave an order to be given to Mr. Tonſon) and perhaps, tho tis many years ſince I ſaw it, a Tranſlation of the firſt Book of Oppian. He had begun a Tragedy of Dion, but made ſmall progreſs in it.

As to his other Affairs, he dyed poor, but honeſt, leaving no Debts or Legacies; except of

of a few p^ds to Mr. Trumbull and my Lady, in token of reſpect, Gratefulneſs, and mutual Eſteem.

I ſhall with pleaſure take upon me to draw this amiable, quiet, deſerving, unpretending Chriſtian and Philoſophical character, in His Epitaph. There Truth may be ſpoken in a few words: as for Flouriſh, & Oratory, & Poetry, I leave them to younger and more lively writers, ſuch as love writing for writing ſake, & w^d rather ſhow their own Fine Parts, y^n Report the valuable ones of any other man. So the Elegy I renounce.

I condole with you from my heart, on the loſs of ſo worthy a man, and a Friend to us both. Now he is gone, I muſt tell you he has done you many a good office, and ſet your character in the faireſt light, to ſome who either miſtook you, or knew you not. I doubt not he has done the ſame for me.

Adieu: Let us love his Memory, and profit by his Example. I am very ſincerely,

D^R SIR

Your affectionate

& real Servant.

Aug 29th, 1730.

A. POPE.

END OF VOL. III.